BEATLEMANIA ERUPTS!

MOJO
The M
agazine

142 REVIEWS
BOYGENIUS, LLOYD COLE, TINARIWEN LUCINDA WILLIAMS & MORE

SEX! DRUGS! ROCK & ROLL!

THE 50 BEST SONGS OF LOU REED & THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

PAUL SIMONON
THE CLASH AND BEYOND

JUDEE SILL
JAILBIRD. JUNKIE. GENIUS.

THE CHAMBERS BROTHERS
TIME HAS COME!

JASON ISBELL
“BOBSLED TO HELL!”

GARY ROSSINGTON
THE LAST SKYNYRD

NEIL YOUNG
HIS GREAT LOST BAND!

PLUS!
BC CAMPLIGHT
DEXYS
JULIE TIPPETTS
WAYNE SHORTER
FELA KUTI

keep your courage natalie merchant
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Her first collection of new songs in nearly a decade

'It's been 30 years since Merchant announced she was quitting 10,000 Maniacs to go it alone. She'd had it, she said, with "art by committee". She kept her word. Since *Tigerlily*, her solo debut, she's led one of the most individualistic careers of any artist of her standing. *Keep Your Courage* is her first of all-new material in nine years. It's also her most beautiful in decades.' — ***Mojo***

'*Keep Your Courage* finds Merchant as witty and welcoming as always, turning her gaze to what helps us endure life's ups and downs. A typically edifying Merchant release, her wise lyrics and compassionate vocals complemented by rich orchestral arrangements and intriguing collaborations.' — ***Uncut***

Includes bonus content of four songs previously unreleased on vinyl

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JUNE 2023

ISSUE 355

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Adrian Boot/urbanimage.tv

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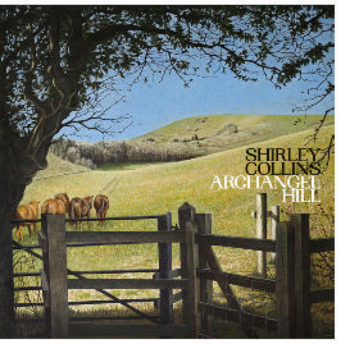

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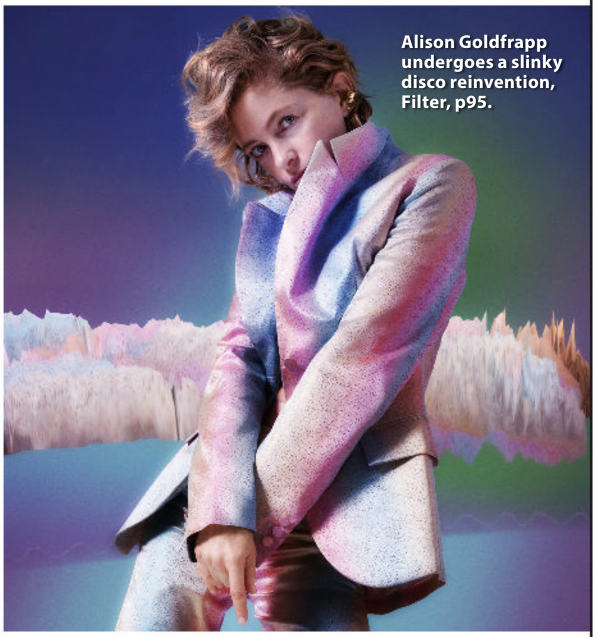

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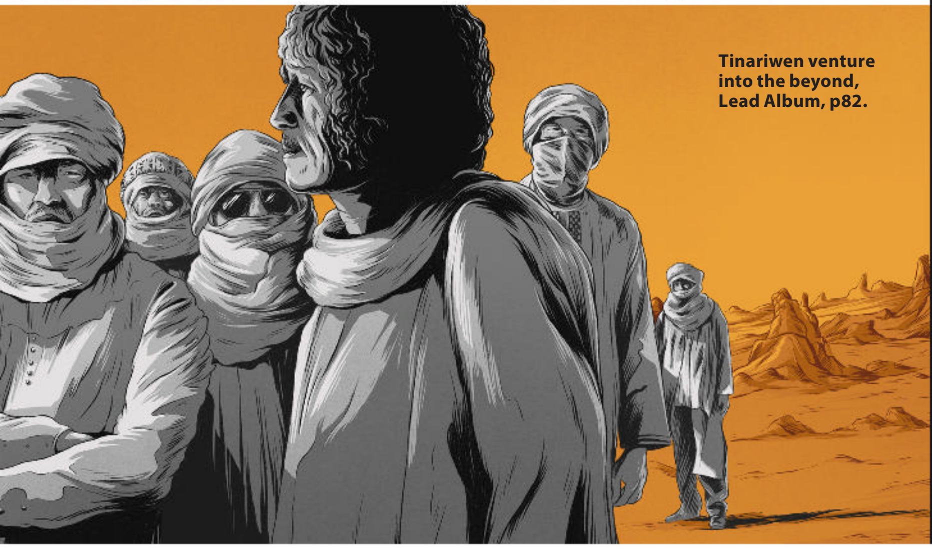

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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE…

Henry Diltz

Henry's Chinese animal is the Tiger, and tigers like to hide in the bushes and watch the other animals, and that's what he does. Henry watches quietly, and when it looks real good, he pushes the button. He documents things he likes and he likes music. (See Henry's photographs of Judee Sill on page 34.)

THINGS ARE GETTING WORSE. PLEASE SEND CHOCOLATE

Martin Aston

Partial to a dose of doom-laden sunshine pop, Martin endured a wet Monday morning in Manchester in order to meet and commiserate with BC Camplight (see page 56). Back in London, he caught up with Lou Reed associate Fred Maher for MOJO's Lou/VU cover feature (see page 66). Martin has pale green eyes.

John Harris

John has been writing for MOJO since 2000. A few years ago, he turned 60 hours of Beatles conversations into the text for the official book that accompanied Peter Jackson's documentary series Get Back; in this issue, he explores the other end of their career, and the revolutions they sparked in 1963.

Dola Baroni, Joe Wilson, Getty

THE FLAMING LIPS

YOSHIMI BATTLES THE PINK ROBOTS

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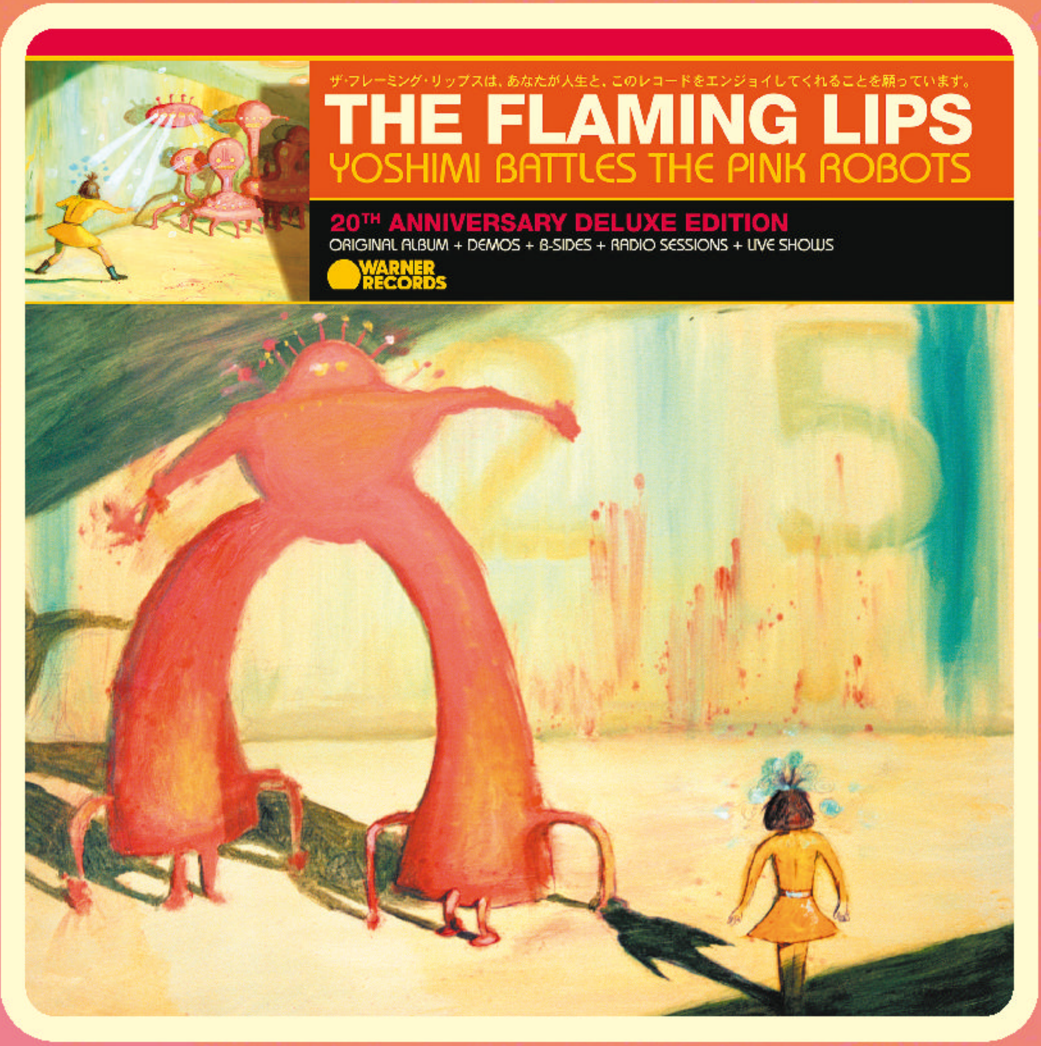
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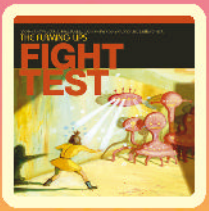
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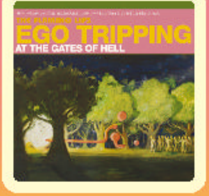
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MOJO PRESENTS

The World's Behind You

A VELVET UNDERGROUND COMPANION

Starring
**LOU REED,
JOHN CALE, NICO,
SPIRITUALIZED,
THE SEEDS,
BO DIDDLEY,
ORNETTE COLEMAN,
THE VELVET
UNDERGROUND
& MORE**

1 BO DIDDLEY

Bring It To Jerome

Legend has it that Moe Tucker learned drums by playing along to Bo Diddley records; later, she tried to record Bo Diddley (the song) on every studio visit. The foundational thud of Diddley drummer Clifton James certainly has echoes in the Velvets' throbbing evolution of rock'n'roll. Bring It To Jerome's super-raw blues, flipside of 1955's Pretty Thing, was included in Lou Reed's 2004 list of his 100 favourite songs.

Written by Green. Arc Music. First released: 1955

2 OLATUNJI

Gin-Go-Lo-Ba (Jin-Go-Low-Bah) (Drums Of Passion)

"The rhythms are really the big attraction," Tucker said of Diddley in 1998, before also enthusing about Babatunde Olatunji – a Nigerian drummer who began a percussion group while studying in New York. Tucker became enamoured with this 1960 track that regularly closed Murray The K's radio show; in 1962, she met Olatunji when his troupe played her Long Island school.

Written by Olatunji. Blackwood Music Inc.
First released: 1960

3 LUNA

Friendly Advice

As indie music and college rock emerged in the '80s, the VU's influence became more pervasive. Not least on Dean Wareham, frontman of Galaxie 500 and then Luna, whose second LP (*Bewitched*, 1994) featured this excellent ramalam. Note the guest guitarist on Friendly Advice – Sterling Morrison!

Written by Sean Eden, Dean Wareham, Stanley Demeski, Luna, Justin Harwood. Published by Tomato Poodle Music/EMI Blackwood Music. ℗1994 WEA International Inc. USEE19400024. Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd. www.lunamusic.com

4 ORNETTE COLEMAN

Lonely Woman

The first entry on Reed's 2004 list of favourite tracks was this game-changing 1959 workout by Coleman with Don Cherry, Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins. Coleman's free approach to jazz inspired Reed's clanging, atonal guitar solos. After they worked together on Guilty in 2003, Reed exclaimed, "This is one of my greatest moments."

Written by Ornette Coleman. Published by MJQ Music/Phrase Text Music/Kensington Music. ℗1959 WEA International Inc. USAT20104716. Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

9 DELMORE SCHWARTZ

The Repetitive Heart, Part IX

"You were the greatest man I ever met," Reed wrote of his teacher at Syracuse University, in 2012. "I wanted to write. One line as good as yours." The Velvets dedicated European Son to the poet because, according to Sterling Morrison, "It has only two stanzas of lyrics and a long instrumental break. Delmore thought rock'n'roll lyrics were the worst things he'd heard in his life; he despised songs with words."

Written by Schwartz. Copyright Control.
First released: 1952

10 LOU REED

I'm Waiting For The Man (May 1965 Demo)

Sealed in an envelope in Lou Reed's office for decades, this extraordinary demo finally surfaced in 2022: Reed and Cale laying down the prototype I'm Waiting For The Man as whimsical Greenwich Village folk, complete with harmonica solo. Before the avantist innovation, the classic songwriting bona fides were secure.

Written by L. Reed. ©1967, EMI Music Publishing, Ltd., Oakfield Avenue Music, Ltd. ℗&©2022 Canal Street Communications, Inc. Under Exclusive License to Light In The Attic. From *Words & Music, May 1965* (Light In The Attic); www.lightintheattic.net

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THE EXCELLENTS

11 THE EXCELLENTS

Coney Island Baby

Not Lou Reed's Coney Island Baby – instead, this one's a second doo wop nugget extracted from Reed's list of 100 favourite songs and dating from 1962. Bronx sextet The Excellents' career was short and thwarted: after Coney Island Baby took off, they were invited to appear on Dick Clark's American Bandstand, but when they couldn't afford to travel to Philadelphia for the recording, their label sent another doo wop group instead, and renamed them The Excellents.

Written by Catalano, Alphonso. Original Music.
First released: 1962

12 THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

Cool It Down

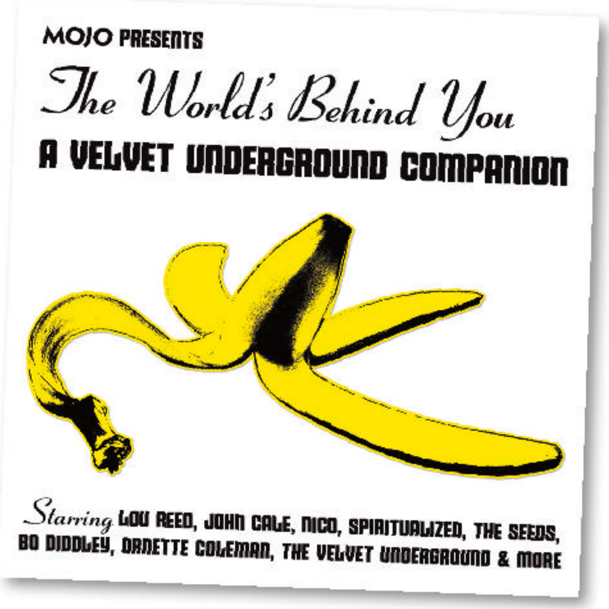
The Velvets at their loosest and grooviest, with a stinging Doug Yule guitar lead and some very New Orleans-style piano playing. A change of drummer, too: Moe Tucker was credited, but was on maternity leave; the shift here was taken by Tommy Castagnaro. Available now on the *Fully Re-Loaded* vinyl edition of *Loaded*.

Written by Sterling Morrison, Doug Yule, Lou Reed. Published by Virpi, Inc. ℗1970 WEA International Inc. USAT20103138 Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

Getty (9), Madeline McManus, Michael Lavine, Hiroyuki Ito

EVEN THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY ARTISTS LEARN FROM those who've gone before, and The Velvet Underground were no exception. For *The World's Behind You*, our latest MOJO Companion CD, we've roamed far and wide to create a radical patchwork of Velvets influences: the primal rock'n'roll and bohemian poetry, Nigerian drum workouts and street corner doo wop that turned them on in their formative years; the avant-garde currents blasting through jazz and classical music that roused their transgressive instincts.

It's a heady mix, shining a light on how the Velvets were so adept at being both great pop artisans and fearsome noiseniks. And it's made headier with the addition of some well-connected drone rock disciples, plus tracks from Lou Reed, John Cale, Nico and The Velvet Underground themselves. From the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, to the safety of your own home – try tuning in to a rock'n'roll station that sounds *quite* like this…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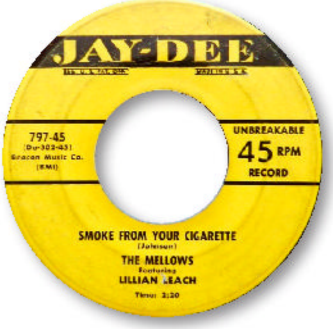
Starring LOU REED, JOHN CALE, NICO, SPIRITUALIZED, THE SEEDS, BO DIDDLEY, ORNETTE COLEMAN, THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & MORE

5 NICO

Saëta

The early 1980s weren't the healthiest time of Nico's life, to put it mildly. But out of the squalor of her London period, some fine music still emerged. Saëta comes from the confusing sessions for her fifth solo album, *Drama Of Exile* (it showed up on the second version, in 1983): post-punk coldwave, ideally suited to her undiminished *froideur*.

Written by Quilichini, Paeffgen. Publisher – Coeur De Lion Int. ISRC Code –GBBLY0100066. ℗1981 Cherry Red Records Ltd. Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records Ltd. www.cherryred.co.uk



6 THE MELLOWS FEATURING LILLIAN LEACH

Smoke From Your Cigarette

Lou Reed's recording career began in 1958 with a high school doo wop group called The Jades (their sole single featured King Curtis on sax). And while his subsequent music sublimated the influence, Reed's love of doo wop never faltered: this gorgeous 1955 smoocher by the New York quartet was another highlight of his 2004 Top 100.

Written by Johnson. Beacon Music Inc.
First released: 1955

7 JOHN CALE

MOONSTRUCK (Nico's Song)

Mercy, Cale's seventeenth solo LP, contains a litany of notable new collaborators: Weyes Blood, Animal Collective, Fat White Family. The highlight, though, is this homage to one of his oldest associates. Over string stabs and massed synths, Cale memorialises the "moonstruck junkie lady" of the VU. "Don't be afraid of this life," he incants, as authoritative and moving as ever at 81.

Written by John Cale. Published by John Cale Music Inc (BMI) ℗&©2023 Domino Recording Co. LTD. From *Mercy* (Domino) https://john-cale.com/

8 SPIRITUALIZED

Why Don't You Smile Now?

Important tune, this: picked up by Syracuse garage R&B band The All Night Workers in 1965, it became the first recorded song credited to Reed/Cale. The mantric gospel fervour of the VU was already present, though – something capitalised upon by Jason Pierce and co for the second Spiritualized single. A launchpad for another great drone rock band.

Written by John Cale, Terry Philips, Lou Reed, Jerry Vance. Published by Keats and Shelly Music Label: Fat Possum Records, under exclusive license from Sony Music Entertainment UK Limited

13 THE SEEDS

Up In Her Room

Not many contemporary rock groups had much of an impact on the Velvets, but it's hard not to hear a kinship in this epic garage rock freak-out from LA's Seeds. From the band's second album, 1966's *A Web Of Sound*, Up In Her Room has a comparable relentless intensity to Sister Ray – though, at 14:45, it is three minutes shorter.

Written by Saxon. Published by Neil Music, Inc. (BMI) adm. Rock & Roll Stew Music © Neil Music, Inc. ℗1966 GNP Crescendo Record Co., Inc. From *A Web of Sound* (GNP Crescendo Records) www.gnpcrescendo.com

14 TONY CONRAD/ ARNOLD DREYBLATT/ JIM O'ROURKE

Tonic 19-01-2001 (Excerpt)

Violinist Tony Conrad's sepulchral drones proved a key influence on John Cale when they worked together, pre-Velvets, in the Theatre Of Eternal Music. Here he is, keeping the ecstatic minimalist faith, on a New York live recording from 2001 with fellow avant luminaries Dreyblatt and O'Rourke.

Written by Conrad/Dreyblatt /O'Rourke. Published by Field Code Music (BMI). ℗&©2023 Black Truffle records. From *Tonic 19-01-2001* (Black Truffle records); www.blacktrufflerecords.com

15 IANNIS XENAKIS

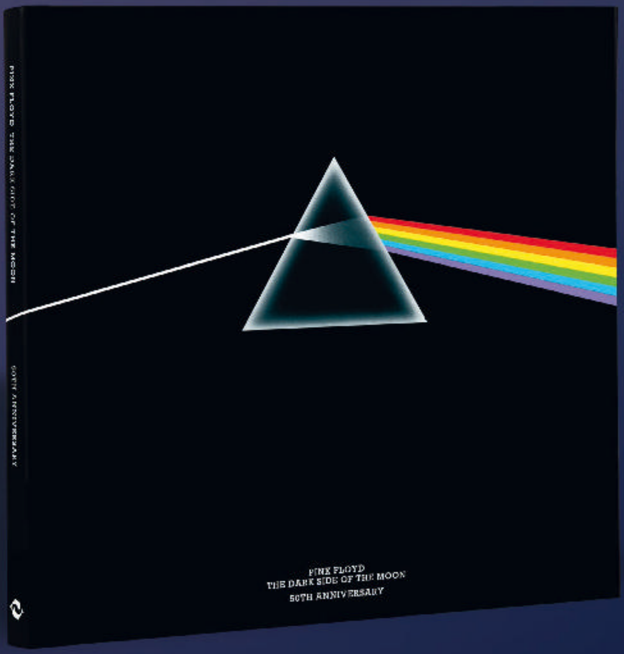
Concret PH

Another striking influence on the young Cale was the Greek master of modern composition Xenakis, who taught him when he arrived from Wales to study at Tanglewood College, Massachusetts. Concret PH was created in Paris, 1958, as a critical piece of *musique concrète*: what you hear is the taped sound of burning charcoal, cut up into tiny fragments and spliced together into a new form.

Written by Xenakis. Copyright Control.
First broadcast: 1958

HEY, BABE!
LOU REED'S
50 GREATEST SONGS
STARTS PAGE 60

FROM STUDIO TO STAGE, PRISM TO LENS



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e·a·r MUSIC

Judy Collins

FOLK STORYTELLER, LEGEND

What music are you currently grooving to?

I like to listen to **Jimmy Webb**, **Adele**, some classical, usually **Bach** cello suites played by [Pablo] **Casals**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Bringing It All Back Home, **Dylan**. I think it's the perfect LP. I was there at a party at Al Grossman's home in Woodstock when I first heard Dylan working out Mr Tambourine Man. It was late at night, and I heard singing, so I left my room and sat on the stairs by myself listening to him write the song. What a magical moment!

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

It was called The Gypsy Rover, I bought it in 1955, at Wells Music in Denver. It was from The Black Knight, movie. The song was transformative, it started my love of folk music.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Andrea Bocelli. He's a remarkable talent and I would love to hear our voices together.

What do you sing in the shower?

Usually something by **William Butler Yeats**, like The Golden Apples Of The Sun (AKA The Song Of Wandering Aengus). I don't perform it live any more, so the shower is a perfect venue.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Rubber Soul, **The Beatles**. I've loved this album since the moment I heard In My Life, it changed me as much as meeting **Leonard Cohen** or hearing **Joni Mitchell** songs.

And your Sunday morning record?

Jimmy Webb's *El Mirage* album… if I fall in love with a song, it sticks with me for years. The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress is one of those songs that lives in my heart.

Judy Collins tours the UK from September. See judycollins.com for info.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING…

Rhoda Dakar

STILL RUDER THAN YOU

What music are you currently grooving to?

Gentleman's Dub Club – you can put it on and just enjoy without it being in your face, as it were – and an Amapiano mix, which is dance music, but distilled through a South African lens – young people music!

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World*. I literally played it to death. And it has the only prog track that I can stomach on it, The Width Of A Circle. It's quite bass heavy, I think that's part of the appeal.

Shervin Lainez, Dean Chalkley

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Millie's My Boy Lollipop. My cousin Janice took me to buy it in Desmond's Hip City in Brixton. It was no later than, like, '66. I still own it. Janice liked Millie as well – her parents used to live in Lagos and she actually saw Millie play live in Nigeria.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I admired people and I may have copied stuff they did but I never wanted to be them. I used to do impressions of **Desmond Dekker** and **Shirley Bassey**, singing Israelites and Big Spender, at family parties, I suppose that's nearest to it.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't. Do what you need to do and get out.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Somebody Else's Guy by **Jocelyn Brown**. I'll put on a rare groove mix and then dance to it vigorously in my front room for an hour, just as exercise.

And your Sunday morning record?

When I used to hang out with **Steve Jones** and **Paul Cook**, on Sunday mornings I'd play these records they had that I could never afford – skinhead reggae, *The Harder They Come* album, some *Tighten Up* volumes… anything with a **Delroy Wilson** vocal is very Sunday morning.

Rhoda Dakar's Version Girl is out on May 26 on Sunday Best Recordings.

Durand Jones

LOUISIANA SOUL

What music are you currently grooving to?

Stevie Wonder's *Hotter Than July*, over and over. It's such an extensive, genre-bending album. Soulful and rock'n'roll grooves, dance, country, reggaeton, beautiful ballads… and Happy Birthday! That record shows me how extensive I can be too.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Right now, **Dionne Warwick**'s *Just Being Myself*. She'd just left Bacharach and David and was trying things that felt true to her soul. It's got beautiful ballads – if I had to listen to one song every day, it would be You Are The Heart Of Me. I also relate to the title track. And I can dance to You're Gonna Need Me.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Jay-Z's *The Blueprint*, at Walmart in Gonzalez, Louisiana. I begged my dad to buy it for me 'cos I loved that tune (*starts singing*) "I love girls, girls, girls, girls…" I was only six or seven.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

This is weird to say 'cos I'm a dude, but **Whitney Houston** circa the late-'80s to the mid-'90s. Her voice could do whatever she wanted it to do. Saxophone-wise, either **Cannonball** [Adderley] or **Sonny Stitt**.

What do you sing in the shower?

Right now, Lately by Stevie Wonder.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I Thought It Was You by **Herbie Hancock**. When I was living in New Orleans, me and my good friend Miles would drive to gigs, smoking blunts, listening to that one. The perfect way to start the night.

And your Sunday morning record?

Nearer My God To Thee by **Sam Cooke & The Soul Stirrers** – the live version. It's before his soulful crooner stage, he's still getting gritty and he drives and pushes it so hard. The girls are just going *crazy* for Sam! He just takes it there.

Durand Jones's Wait Til I Get Over is out on May 5 on Dead Oceans.

> "We'd drive to gigs, smoking blunts, listening to Herbie Hancock."
>
> DURAND JONES

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Theories, rants, etc.

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"I WANT TO MATURE LIKE A WARRIOR," wrote Lou Reed in a letter to the New York Times, October 26, 2010. Ostensibly, his subject was Tai Chi, the martial art that put him "in touch with the invisible power of – yes – the universe." The same ambition, though, powered the creative arc of Reed's long and extraordinary musical career: one that historically found grace and profundity amidst scenes of untrammelled squalor. He may have left what he termed "a study in reckless excess" behind him, but Reed carried forward an understanding that a life of extremes could be lived with meaning. He matured like a warrior who could remember the value of his formative skirmishes.

As, of course, can we. This month sees a glut of significant Lou activity. The Art Of The Straight Line: My Tai Chi, the book project Reed plotted before his death in 2013, arrives in the shops, along with a deluxe vinyl reupholstering of the fourth Velvet Underground album, *Loaded*. There's a significant anniversary looming, too – the 50th birthday of his magisterial *Berlin*, that we celebrate in this packed new issue of MOJO. A perfect time, we also felt, to navigate the boulevards and back alleys of his catalogue, and surface with a Top 50 list of Lou Reed and Velvet Underground songs. Outraged as I am that Metal Machine Music, A-1 – A-4 only made it to Number 47? Your e-mails, please, to the usual address…

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

OK, should I start now?

At last – at long long last! – an article on Alan Hull and Lindisfarne [MOJO 354]. I have very fond memories of taking albums to school to play in the common room, and one of the lads brought in *Fog On The Tyne*. We used to play it and sing along to the title song. I think we all wanted an excuse to sing, "We can have a wee-wee/We can have a wet on the wall." Such wonderful and strangely poignant irreverence in that song, which sums up the spirit of Alan Hull – playful but serious at the same time. His solo albums are disgracefully overlooked. They are peppered with gems. Alan kept his no-bullshit Geordie muse right up to the end. I had the good fortune of seeing him play in a small arts centre back in the '80s. He was a great storyteller too.

Alan Savage, via e-mail

It's a crushing job

Thanks a lot for another great issue [MOJO 353]. Loved the David Crosby and Leon Russell portraits. The Jeff Beck piece was also outstanding. Despite all the accolades about Beck's obvious virtuosity from fellow musicians, what really stood out to me was that he seemed to be most comfortable in the presence of women and that he was so supportive of female musicians during his career (As an aside, I'm writing this on International Women's Day). Then I looked through the pictures you selected for the article and noticed they all showed Beck with other male musicians. If the female musicians were so important, why not include a few snapshots? Why not show a picture of Beck with his wife, who seemed to be such an important support in his life? That's a perspective we desperately need in the male-dominated world of rock that perpetuates these outdated and unhealthy notions of what a man should be.

Andreas Heller, Lake Constance, Germany

There's nobody left

I thought that your Real Gone section should mark the death of Tony Hill (c.1943-December 8, 2022). He was guitarist in The Misunderstood during their *Before The Dream Faded* period, and was also very briefly part of Turquoise with David Bowie and Hermione Farthingale. He subsequently formed psych-rockers High Tide, including Simon House (later Hawkwind/Bowie) on violin. They made two albums in '69/70, the first being the relentlessly heavy *Sea Shanties* and an eponymous second, which to my mind was much better, with some folkier strands and subtler arrangements. They moved down to Puddletown in Dorset and duly fried their brains alongside Arthur Brown and others.

Hill then teamed up with Drachen Theaker and made a series of demos and jams which were released sporadically over the years. He returned to make a fine solo album called *Inexactness* with The Bevis Frond and others. I was introduced to High Tide aged about 12 and it pretty much changed my whole approach to music. I think he should be remembered and celebrated.

Nick Brown, via e-mail

You're a disgrace, a disgrace to yourself

Is it really possible MOJO didn't review Kelela's new album, *Raven*? Out on Warp, February 10. No offence, but that's a massive oversight on your part because it's a fantastic and unique piece of music. Agreed that it takes some time to discover all the hidden layers and details, but it's super rewarding. In fact, *Raven* sounds like a contemporary 4AD album.

Oliver Mahr, Berlin

My dear, there is nothing you cannot say to me

Of all the bands I can't believe I missed in the '90s, Sparklehorse must be top. That excellent Keith Cameron feature on them in MOJO 352 led me to stream all their albums. I was so impressed I've bought the lot on CD, the format of the era.

Gordon Russell, via e-mail

I'm sorry, this is just too much

I had been looking forward to seeing the order of Wilco albums in the How To Buy feature [MOJO 354], having been a fan from the start; certainly no surprises in the top three except maybe *A Ghost Is Born* pipping *Yankee Foxtrot Hotel* to the top spot. My only gripe is that Tweedy's *Sukierae* didn't get a mention in the Now Dig This section. For me, this contains some of Jeff's loveliest melodies, as well as some interesting/challenging experimentation, and would have taken the coveted fourth spot for me. I saw them tour the album, with Jeff being funny and on his best behaviour (presumably because his son Spencer was in the band?), and enjoyed it as much as any Wilco show.

Glen Hopkin, via e-mail

Listen. I am too economical an artist to go on with this

Love the new issue [MOJO 354], but hate to point out to Colin Blunstone that Elvis recorded many Sun classics on that same studio spot he stood on, but not Heartbreak Hotel, which was recorded at his first Nashville session for RCA.

John O'Sullivan, Tintagel

It's just fabulous, isn't it?

Just got my hands on MOJO 352 – I've been buying it since issue 6. I'm 70 in April, a retired music promoter and music obsessive, and I find music means more as I've gotten older. I was delighted to read an in-depth look at Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind* – an album, like his *Rough And Rowdy Ways*, that I went out and bought without hearing a single track from (other bands I've done this with recently include Fontaines D.C., Idles, Suede, The Bevis Frond, Rosalie Cunningham, Sleaford Mods and Red Hot Chili Peppers). This is something of an old habit of mine I've recently got back into. I used to do it all the while during the '70s. In those days I trusted the word of friends and the NME – nowadays it's MOJO.

And can I just say how good the CDs on the cover have been recently? The two that I've nearly worn out playing are *The Meaning Of Within: MOJO's Guide To The Fab Avant-Garde* and *Us And Them: A Pink Floyd Companion*, both full of surprises and delights. Both these CDs may be a little avant-garde for a lot of people's music tastes, but stick with them, as they really do repay repeated listening.

Clive Gascoigne, Wolverhampton

Who wants to be an angel?

In 1968, when I was 18 years old, I would frequent a record store in Walton-On-Thames called Rumbelows. Nearly every Saturday I rummaged through the racks as an excuse to stare at the goddess behind the counter, then choose a record I thought would impress her with my sophisticated taste in music. Needless to say it didn't work, and I was stuck with yet another unwanted LP. These accumulated into two boxfuls as a testament to unrequited love – that is until I transferred my affections to an usherette in the Regal Cinema, who carried a torch for me, and I for her. I could go on.

My acquisitive nephew now has his eyes on this cache and is talking about me making a will. I can leave him the records but not the joy, excitement, hope, longing and despair of those tumultuous days – that will pass with me.

Peter McFarlane, via e-mail

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET **MOJO**

Donovan's Greatest Hits: the photographer's images of Jimi Hendrix for the Observer Magazine, August 1967, and (left) Debbie Harry for Cosmopolitan, December 1978.

Picture This

See ravishing, rare images of Debbie, Jimi and more in Terence Donovan: One Hundred Faces.

ON AUGUST 25, 1967, photographer Terence Donovan went to Upper Berkeley Street, London W1, to take portraits of Jimi Hendrix for The Observer's colour supplement. The accompanying interview detailed Hendrix's recent guitar-arson at Monterey Pop, and added "the Daughters of the American Revolution complained that he was too sexy."

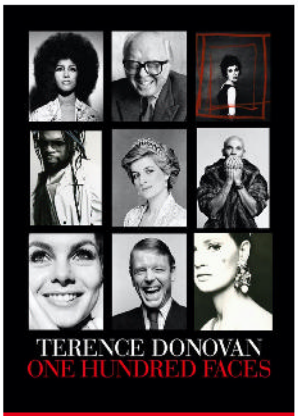
It was a less frantic Hendrix captured that day by Stepney-born Donovan, who, with David Bailey and Brian Duffy, made up the so-called 'Black Trinity' of snappers exemplifying working-class attitude and dash in the 1960s and beyond. "Compare the calmness of that image against Jimi Hendrix's actual behaviour and life and all the things that were going on around him," says Donovan's widow Diana, who's discussing the new book Terence Donovan: One Hundred Faces. "It would be interesting to be able to ask Terry how on earth he managed to create that calm."

Donovan took his own life in 1996, and the book shows what he created in the realm of celebrity and music from the 1960s until that point. Joining notables including Sophia Loren, Kenneth Williams and Yasser Arafat, there are images of Debbie Harry, Roland Kirk, Marianne Faithfull, Bryan Ferry, Pet Shop Boys, Elvis Costello and Mark E Smith, plus the House Of God techno night at Birmingham's Que Club, where Donovan's son Terry was DJing. Work on the book began, with graphic designer David Hillman, after the publication of '21's Terence Donovan: 100 Fashion Photos. The idea, Diana continues, was for "a small format book of his work, something that would appeal to a younger audience, that wouldn't cost a lot."

The portraits capture choice moments between photographer and subject, but Diana is cautious about trying to explain how her husband, a black belt in judo, did what he did. "I wasn't involved in his work at all, and I honestly don't think he would have enjoyed that for one minute," she says. "But he would bring all the contacts home and we would look through them together. He had a very, very clear view of which image was going to work for the actual job that he was commissioned to do. Nothing to do with his photography was random. Every subject, anybody who came in front of his lens, was an individual person and needed to be treated differently. He wanted them to not relax too much, because he wanted them to concentrate a bit – it was very, very precise. He was completely dedicated to his craft, and you know, he got to the soul of people."

Would Terence have approved of the book? "It's very hard to say what other people will think, especially somebody like Terence. He would have had to think about it a bit, but yes, I think he probably would."

Ian Harrison



> **"He got to the soul of people."**
> **DIANA DONOVAN**

Terence Donovan: One Hundred Faces is published by OH Editions on April 27. ➢

Terence Donovan

High flyers: The Ducks (from left) Johnny Craviotto, Bob Mosley, Jeff Blackburn, Neil Young in 1977.

QUACK! IT'S NEIL YOUNG'S '77 SANTA CRUZ BAR BAND THE DUCKS. BUT HOW?

IN THE summer of 1977, following the release of his eighth studio solo album, *American Stars 'N Bars*, Neil Young moved to Santa Cruz, the northern Californian city that was at the time a haven for stoners and surfers. There, from July to September, he jammed and gigged with The Ducks, a bar band supergroup comprising bassist Bob Mosley of Moby Grape, guitarist Jeff Blackburn – co-writer of My My, Hey Hey (Out Of The Blue) – and drummer Johnny Craviotto.

The band broke up after three months and so the 20 shows that The Ducks played together have become the stuff of legend, and widely bootlegged. But only now, 46 years later, are their live, mobile studio recordings due for a proper release, with the 25-track album, *High Flyin'*, as part of Young's Original Bootleg Series.

Bob Mosley first met Neil Young when Moby Grape shared the stage at the Whisky A Go Go in LA with Buffalo Springfield in '66. He tells MOJO today that he thinks there was more than one reason why Young was attracted to both Santa Cruz and The Ducks.

"I think he wanted to be part of a band again," he says. "And it was summertime and he wanted to surf. The local surf shop built him a board. So, it worked out good. He got to do two things."

"This band isn't just me and some other guys who back me up," Young told Dan Coyro of Good Times magazine in '77. "It kind of reminds me of the time I was in the Buffalo Springfield."

The group were very much a democratic outfit, with all four taking lead vocals and throwing songs into the mix. "We just made a setlist and Jeff would introduce them," Mosley remembers. "The most memorable thing was the guitar playing that Neil played. It was so beautiful. It was high energy and it fit for songwriters real well."

Young's long-time friend, Sandy Mazzeo, quoted in Jimmy McDonough's 2002 Neil biography Shakey, recalled the source of the band's name. "We were driving around town for days, throwing out names… There were a lotta ducks crossing the street and somebody yelled out, 'The Ducks'."

> "I think Neil wanted to be part of a band again."
> **BOB MOSLEY**

Local stores quickly sold out of duck calls, bought by fans who loudly honked them in-between songs. "Oh yeah," Mosley chuckles. "'Quack quack!' Great fun."

But due to Young's contractual touring obligation to Crazy Horse, The Ducks never played outside of Santa Cruz. There was vague talk of a Ducks album at the time, and many of the shows were professionally taped. But come the end of the summer, Young quit the city after his rented bungalow was burgled and his TV and guitar stolen.

"Neil just had enough, I guess," says Mosley. "Neil didn't come around any more, so we didn't play any more. Plus I was doing stuff with Moby Grape again."

Following years of listening to their bootlegs, the bassist is clearly very happy to finally hear an official Ducks album. "It's much cleaner and it's got all the songs from all the different gigs," he enthuses. "It has quality." Two years ago, Mosley and Young even spoke on the phone for the first time in nigh on half a century. "He told me he was 75, and I told him I was 78. And he said, 'Oh, I remember when I was 33 and a third…' (*laughs*)."

Tom Doyle

The Ducks' High Flyin' is out now on Reprise.

GIMME FIVE… LAZY SONGS

The Mills Brothers
Lazy Bones
(BRUNSWICK, 1934)

The Ohio harmonising/band-mimicking siblings sack off work early and go and sit under a tree, evoking idleness as a borderline spiritual, near Zen, experience. Don't miss the version of loopy jazz standard Nagasaki on the flip.

The Kinks
Sunny Afternoon
(PYE, 1966)

A foreboding, hungover and ambivalent lament for Harold Wilson's tax regimen and its effects on the inherited wealth of aristocrats in their country piles, "lazing on a sunny afternoon." See also Small Faces' 1968 Number 2 hit Lazy Sunday, natch.

Phantom
Lazy Fascist
(COOL GHOUL, 1978)

Brit-reggae outfit sort-of-cover Marley's Crazy Baldhead. The obscure Cool Ghoul label also released Blazing Sons' Chant Down The National Front, Ricky & The Mutations' Thatcher Rap and General & Killerwatt's dancehall Arthur Daley tribute Minder.

Doug Lazy
Doug Lazy Getting' Crazy
(ATLANTIC, 1990)

Washington DC hip-house producer starts his debut LP with snoring, then gets lively on tracks including Go 2 Work and Let It Roll. Fans of nutty team-ups, see his cover of the Book Of Love, guest-starring Ben E. King and Bo Diddley.

Happy Mondays & Karl Denver
Lazyitis – One Armed Boxer
(FACTORY, 1989)

Swinton's Rabelaisian E-morlocks rope in Glasgow's yodelling '60s hitmaker for an unholy mash-up of the Fabs, Sly Stone and David Essex. "I've never even taken aspirin," said Denver, re drug use.

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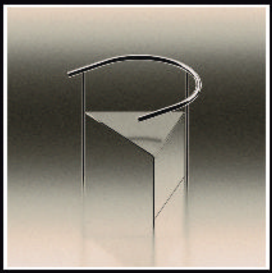

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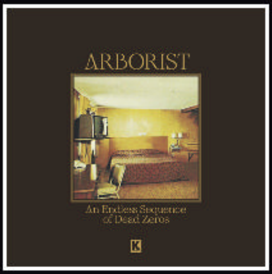
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Rudy De Anda

RUDY DE ANDA

CLOSET BOTANIST

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caleb elliott
weed, wine & time

CALEB ELLIOTT

WEED, WINE & TIME

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ALL HANDS_MAKE LIGHT

"DARLING THE DAWN"

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EL MICHELS AFFAIR & BLACK THOUGHT
GLORIOUS GAME

EL MICHELS AFFAIR & BLACK THOUGHT

GLORIOUS GAME

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CIAN NUGENT

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NO QUARTER LP / CD

Seven years since Nugent's previous album, "She Brings Me Back..." merges the previously explored styles of his prior records. Mixed by Cooper Crain (Bitchin Bajas) in Stereolab's Press Play Studios in London.

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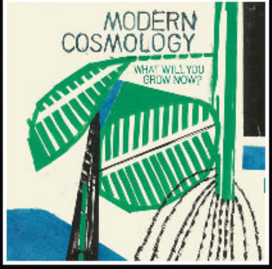
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WHAT WILL YOU GROW NOW?

MODERN COSMOLOGY

WHAT WILL YOU GROW NOW?

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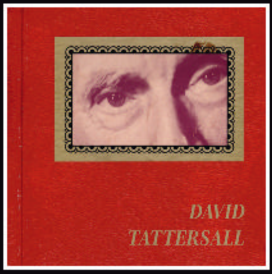

DAVID TATTERSALL

ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE OCEAN

WHERE ITS AT IS WHERE YOU ARE LP

David Tattersall, the Wave Pictures guitarist and frontman, releases a solo album of interpretations of John Fahey tunes, recorded live in the studio.

SHADOWGRAPHS

SHADOWGRAPHS

ROYAL OAKIE CD

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***Divine* inspiration: Dexys' (clockwise from above right) Kevin Rowland, Sean Read, producer/additional musician Toby Chapman and Big Jim Paterson.**

> "A guy who's pretending to be completely macho ends up somewhere else completely."
> **KEVIN ROWLAND**

DEXYS RETURN WITH *THE FEMININE DIVINE*

KEVIN ROWLAND's last LP was 2016 covers set *Let The Record Show: Dexys Do Irish And Country Soul*. "The whole experience around that, I just found really draining," Rowland tells MOJO today. "I had no interest in doing music. I mean, like, 2017, 2018, 2019, no ideas were coming. And then probably two years ago, maybe, I thought, I'd actually like to do something now."

Songs co-written, individually, with Dexys trombonist Big Jim Paterson, keyboardist Mike Timothy and guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Sean Read, were demoed until late 2021. In 2022 work continued in studios including Read's Famous Times in Hackney, Timothy's set-up in Willesden and producer Toby Chapman's space in Catford. Sound files were exchanged on e-mail, with Rowland singing some of the string and brass parts.

"Sometimes it's synthesized instruments on there and sometimes there's natural instruments," says Rowland, who confirms that violinist Helen O'Hara is not part of this Dexys configuration. "I'm not prejudiced against them at all. You know, whatever sounds good." When MOJO suggests some songs have a vintage soul influence, Rowland is mildly nonplussed. "It's intuitive," he says. "I didn't really think about styles but I think we're always trying to make the music soulful."

At one point what Rowland calls "a slight fall-out" between him and Chapman made him doubt the project would be finished. "There were some very frustrating moments and we stopped at one point. Some things Toby was doing were really good and some I didn't like at all. Then I spoke to Pete Schwier, who's co-produced us for years, and he just sort of started to oversee the project. He was just a calming presence, and we were able to pick it up again, and then I was really pleased with what we got."

Some of the material pre-existed his writing drought: It's Alright Kevin (Manhood 2023) was played live in an earlier form on Channel 4 in 1993 and recorded for a 2003 Dexys best-of. Now the song is part of a wider concept. "I felt we could get that song better and I could say something new with it," says Rowland. "[The album] is about women and it's about masculinity and to some extent, femininity. It's a journey."

The journey begins with The One That Loves You, a song of 'Are you looking at my girlfriend?' violent promise. "I wrote that with Jim when I was in that place in the early '90s," says Rowland." Then It's Alright Kevin (Manhood 2023) is saying, 'actually, that's not how I really feel', the next one he's getting free from external restrictions… by track five, The Feminine Divine, he's starting to look at women in a completely different way, looking back at his past and saying, 'Wow, I've just had this all wrong.'"

They're going to tour it in a similar theatrical way to 2012's comeback *One Day I'm Going To Soar*, with an unnamed female vocalist playing the 'Goddess' female lead. Rowland adds ideas are still coming. "It comes quickly when the mood is with me, but it's getting to the mood that's the problem."

Ian Harrison

FACT SHEET

Title: *The Feminine Divine*
Due: July
Production: Pete Schwier and Toby Chapman
Additional production: Kevin Rowland, Sean Read and Mike Timothy
Songs: I'm Going To Get Free/The One That Loves You/ My Submission/ Coming Home
The Buzz: "It's as clear as day that there's a narrative. There's a guy who's pretending to be completely macho and he ends up somewhere else completely. Is he happier? Yeah."
Kevin Rowland

ALSO WORKING

…Variety has reported that **PAUL McCARTNEY** has played bass on a new **Andrew Watt**-produced album by **The Rolling Stones**. Also due to contribute, they say, is **Ringo Starr**, though in what capacity was not mentioned …Variety also reported on a new score for a documentary on late rap one-off **Biz Markie** by **PRINCE PAUL** (below), who added he was, "teetering on wanting to make another record" … coming in July, *The Endless Coloured Ways – The Songs Of* **NICK DRAKE** finds his canon reinterpreted by the likes of **Aldous Harding**, **Fontaines D.C.**, **Nadia Reid**, **Phil Selway** and more …**CREEP SHOW**, the vintage synth specialists with **John Grant** and Cabaret Voltaire's **Mal** in the line-up, release new LP *Yawning Abyss* in June …**THE B-52's** may be disbanding later this year, but singer **Cindy Wilson** is promising new solo music …**MADNESS** are working on a new LP. Guitarist **Chris Foreman** has shared possible song titles including Hillsborough, Get Out Of My Pub and Theatre Of The Absurd – it may appear in summer …**ALICE COOPER** revealed details of his new album on his Nights With Alice Cooper radio show, saying it's "really gonna knock you out. Everybody really likes it, the people that have heard it so far. It's just a rocking rock'n'roll album" …**RUFUS WAINWRIGHT** releases his guest-packed LP *Folkocracy* in June. Collaborators include **Chaka Khan**, **David Byrne**, **Susanna Hoffs** (left), **Brandi Carlile**, **Van Dyke Parks** and more … **SIGUR RÓS** will release their eighth LP in June…

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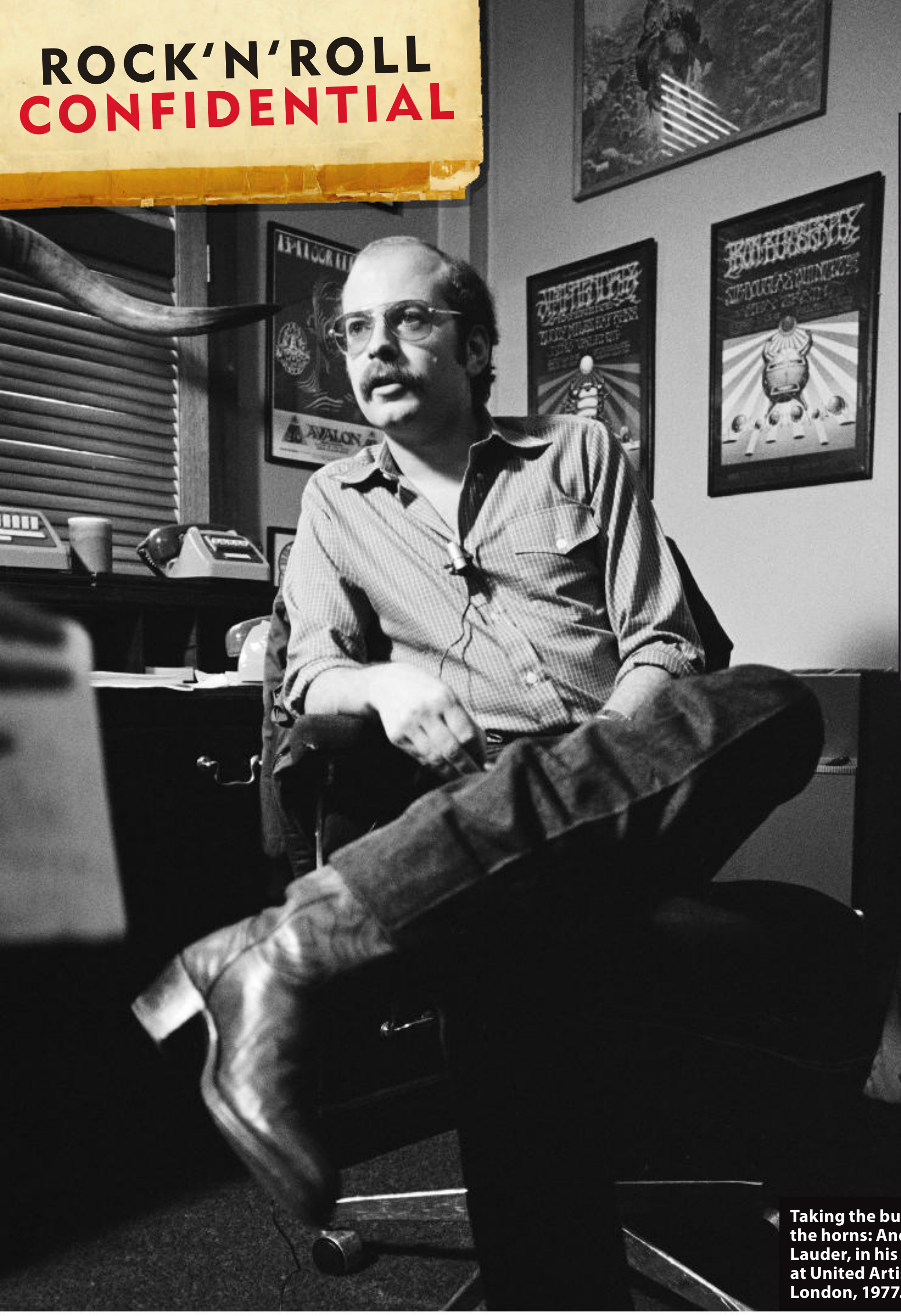

Taking the bull by the horns: Andrew Lauder, in his office at United Artists, London, 1977.

Getty

ANDREW LAUDER

The legendary A&R man talks about the psych/pub rock/punk '70s, The Stone Roses, and missing the Fabs' last gig.

THE MOJO reader knows Andrew Lauder's works. In his decade tenure at the Liberty/UA label, he oversaw a diverse catalogue ranging from the Groundhogs and Can to pub rockers Brinsley Schwarz and Dr. Feelgood, on to The Stranglers and Buzzcocks. After he left in 1977, his later imprints included Radar and its successor F-Beat (Costello, Nick Lowe), Demon/Edsel (whose catalogue curation presaged the MOJO mindset) and Silvertone (The Stone Roses). These tales and more are told in his frabjous new memoir Happy Trails, which details a young Hartlepool music nut seeking his fortune in London in 1965. "I got very, very lucky," says Lauder, a genial and modest presence, from his home in France. "One thing after another fell into place, in a ridiculous manner…"

The book details how you missed the chance to see The Beatles on the roof of Apple in '69.

I did. My friend Wayne Bardell, who was working at Apple Publishing, rang up and said, "Get yourself over here, The Beatles are going to play on the roof!" I just looked at this page of meetings I had and said, "Give me a bit more notice next time they do it." Ha! I remember opening the window, because [Liberty/UA] was in Albemarle Street, which isn't that far from Savile Row, and I thought if the wind's blowing in the right direction, I might be able to hear it… but it wasn't, so I managed to miss that one.

All the clubs are in walking distance from '65. You're in the right place and at the rightest time.

That's true. One day I was picking bits of sheet music out at Southern Music on Denmark Street, next to where songwriters John Carter and Ken Lewis were chatting about a record they'd sung on, which was The Who's I Can't Explain. They told me [The Who] were playing the Marquee every Tuesday and I should go. I did and it was full, but it wasn't rammed. You could go to the bathroom, come back, and still have your place. I managed to stand opposite Pete Townshend's amp. The following week that was impossible.

LAUDER LOUDER

Andrew's piping-hot five.

- **1 Quicksilver Messenger Service** *Happy Trails* (CAPITOL, 1969)
- **2 The Beatles** *Please Please Me* (PARLOPHONE, 1963)
- **3 Howlin' Wolf** *Howlin' Wolf* (CHESS, 1962)
- **4 The Pretty Things** *The Pretty Things* (FONTANA, 1965)
- **5 Wilco** *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* (NONESUCH, 2002)

Enviable stuff!

Yeah. But all I can think of is, I wish I'd been in Liverpool in 1963 watching Kingsize Taylor & The Dominoes, or at shows in San Francisco in 1965… never mind, I was lucky to be where I was.

What were your A&R instincts at UA based on?

I was sort of a frustrated musician, so I almost projected myself – what bands would I like to *be* in? Brinsley Schwarz, or Hawkwind, and I would love to have been in Dr. Feelgood! Rock'n'roll – what I liked about Merseybeat or The Pirates, the Feelgoods brought all that back really. And I loved collecting records and got a buzz out of putting them out. I hadn't had an education in how to run a record company, like if I'd got a job at Decca or EMI, so you didn't know what you weren't supposed to do. I was putting out High Tide records and signing Hawkwind, and no one's kind of stopping me.

Do any labels still have that spirit?

Probably Lawrence Bell from Domino, Geoff Travis [Rough Trade] is still doing it, Mute are still going – putting out records by Neu! and Can that I put out in the first place!

The book takes pains to say that The Stone Roses' allegedly-awful deal had nothing to do with you.

Well, it didn't. I'd love to say I signed The Stone Roses, but it wasn't me. It was actually Roddy McKenna [A&R at Silvertone parent label Jive]. Their contract was as bad as anything I've ever seen. But you could talk all day about Gareth [Evans, Stone Roses' manager]. Obviously, the group fired him later, but he was definitely partly responsible for their success, but also for their demise. The only people that really benefited, and I'm really glad they did, was Rockfield Studios [in Wales]. The Stone Roses basically kept Rockfield alive – they were there for about a year of turning up, or turning up late, or not turning up at all.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

The idea that mixing friendship and business is a no-no – I found it to be almost the opposite. I became very friendly with the Groundhogs. Doug Smith, who managed Hawkwind, is still a friend, Jean-Jacques from The Stranglers is a really good mate. I could go on. So, you *can* mix business with pleasure.

As told to Ian Harrison

> "What band would I like to *be* in? Dr Feelgood!"
> **ANDREW LAUDER**

Happy Trails: Andrew Lauder's Charmed Life And High Times In The Record Business by Andrew Lauder and Mick Houghton is published by White Rabbit on April 27.

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

David Thomas

Pere Ubu’s trenchant mastermind considers the majesty of Van Dyke Parks’ **Song Cycle** (Warner Bros, 1967)

It was more than 18,000 nights ago. The LP? *Song Cycle* by Van Dyke Parks. It changed my life… long before I heard it. Confused?

In the late ’60s, I was tutored at college level. One school buddy liked Frank Zappa, the other Herb Alpert. I had no idea that these musicians didn’t fit together.

At that time Warner Brothers printed LPs with inner sleeves promoting one of their acts. Concerning *Song Cycle*, the promo noted that it was “weird and unlikeable”. The perspective intrigued me. Not enough to buy but enough to remember the name… Van Dyke Parks. I kept an eye out for complementary input. I noted that Frank Zappa used a singer named Captain Beefheart. I kept searching. For a summer I lived in a White Panther-ish commune. We listened to three albums: the first Wailers LP, *Kick Out The Jams* and *Smiley Smile*.

In the linernotes to *Smiley Smile*, I came across… Van Dyke Parks. In the midst of research into the meaning and art of Rock Music, understanding emerged. Following Good Vibrations, the perfect single, Brian Wilson took on the recording of a perfect album. Broken by the task, he was, ironically, successful because the LP, never finished by him, came to exist in a perfect form via the imaginations of the listeners to dozens of album bootleg demos. His partner was… Van Dyke Parks. That man again!

I became a rock myth, not a scientist. I married a die-hard VDP fan… CDs happened. She bought everything by VDP. I heard *Discover America* – an LP of calypso covers! My mind split open. But, finally, I heard *Song Cycle*. I was ready for it.

Years later, we divorced. It was amicable. The only dispute – who gets the VDP CDs. Oh, and the Hank Williams collection.

Pere Ubu’s Trouble On Big Beat Street is out on May 26 on Cherry Red.

Song Cycle / Van Dyke Parks
Song Cycle / Van Dyke Parks
Song Cycle / Van Dyke Parks

MEMPHIS AND NEW ORLEANS SOUL-FUNK ROYALTY, IN EAST ANGLIA?

IN EARLY JUNE, British festival-goers will have a rare chance to experience authentic Memphis soul and New Orleans funk, live in rural Suffolk. This year, roots weekender Red Rooster boasts the debut UK appearance by the Take Me To The River All-Stars, a State-side revue which has grown out of a pair of much-garlanded movies about the black music traditions in those two culturally rich cities in the American South.

Attractions include the surviving line-up of the Hi Rhythm Section, who backed Al Green, Ann Peebles and Syl Johnson, and Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr from New Orleans Mardi Gras group, The Wild Magnolias, who’ll be togged up in ceremonial Indian feathered headgear and brocaded costume. “The idea of the movies,” says director Martin Shore, “was to document our legacy musicians, pass the torch down to the next generations, and ensure that the whole culture is supported.”

Charitably financed, 2014’s TMTTR Memphis showed surviving veterans like William Bell, Mavis Staples and Bobby ‘Blue’ Bland cutting collaborative tracks with emerging Tennessee talents like rapper Benjamin ‘Lil’ P-Nut’ Flores Jr. A performance strand followed. “It has helped our career tremendously,” enthuses organist the Reverend Charles Hodges, who says the reunited players have recently worked with Al Green. “People come to see an event, and that leads to them making a phone call, like, ‘Would you consider doing this track in the studio?’”

The same three-pronged movie/soundtrack/tour strategy ensued for 2022’s TMTTR New Orleans. A NOLA tour saw Dumpstafunk, The Meters’ George Porter Jr and Jon Cleary play stand-alone sets, with a more freewheeling approach developing for festivals, as artists from both cities started to cross-pollinate their respective traditions.

For Red Rooster, Hi Rhythm will be fronted by both Tower Of Power belter Marcus Scott and Bo Dollis (“an ace soul singer, as well as a Big Chief”, notes Shore), with horn parts covered by New Orleans’ Big Six Brass Band, who’ll also be bringing their Second Line moves to Mardi Gras workouts with Dollis and his mum, Big Queen Rita, who’s been involved with The Wild Magnolias since the ’60s. Also featuring are Shardé Thomas and Rising Star, present-day standard-bearers for Othar Turner’s Fife & Drum tradition in Mississippi.

Music being handed down is familiar to Hodges, who started out in the late ’50s playing with his brothers in their father Leroy Sr’s band the Germantown Blue Dots. “Dad played with Memphis Slim, Muddy Waters and all these people, and I thank God for him showing us the ins and outs of everything,” he says. “It’s an honour and a privilege to continue to be doing it at this stage in our lives. I still have a portion of my health and strength. I’m thinkin’ I’m still in my right mind, and if I must say it myself, we seem like today we’re getting even better at it.”

“Today we’re getting even better at it.”
REVEREND CHARLES HODGES

Shore reveals that the next Take Me To The River movie will focus on London, “telling the British Invasion story way differently from the way it’s been told before… we want to break down *all* the barriers, whether it be gender, generation, ethnicity, nationality or genre, and be an example to everyone.”

Andrew Perry

For info see redrooster.org.uk

Brian David Stevens

We know you got soul: (clockwise from above) Take Me To The River’s Bo Dollis Jr & The Wild Magnolias; organist Reverend Charles Hodges; fife-player/singer Shardé Thomas.

CULT HEROES

Keeper of the flame: Julie in 1968 and (below) today.

’60s FACE AND IMPROV EMINENCE JULIE TIPPETTS FORGES ON

JULIE TIPPETTS is keeping warm by her Rayburn oven at home in Gloucestershire this windy March morning. “I better check the bin’s not blown over,” she laughs. She’s unused to doing interviews these days – “They got too invasive in the ’60s so I stopped,” she explains – but she’s called MOJO to talk about *Sound On Stone*, the exceptional third volume in her and her late husband Keith Tippett’s *Couple In Spirit* duet series.

While their previous work captured the pair’s spontaneous improv-sparring, Julie was left to construct the album alone after Keith’s passing in 2020. Multi-tracking her vocal over previously unissued concert performances, the result is a powerful exploration of grief and healing. “I tried to listen to it before the interview,” she says. “I started to cry.”

Born in London in 1947, Julie Driscoll sang and played guitar from a young age, and accompanied her dad’s West End club combo in her early teens. When she first met Tippett in 1969, she’d already drawn a line under a successful pop career. Working with Giorgio Gomelsky, between 1964 and ’67 she issued a series of solo singles before joining R&B revue Steampacket alongside Long John Baldry, Rod Stewart and Hammond organ specialist Brian Auger, her voice now a crystal clear, expressive blues-soul wail. “Nina [Simone] was the touchstone,” she says. “If you could stir emotion like Nina…”

When Steampacket split, she and Auger regrouped as Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity. They blended psych, blues and jazz on 1967’s *Open* and 1969’s *Streetnoise*. A June ’68 UK Number 5 with then-unreleased Bob Dylan song This Wheel’s On Fire, meanwhile, brought Julie the adulation that accompanies hits. Her striking image – shag pixie hair, cat eyeliner, psych garb – made her an icon of the high ’60s. “I hated it,” she says today, “the constant attention, of being on show.”

After appearing on 1969’s 33⅓ Revolutions Per Monkee TV special (“we flew in, did it, flew out,” she recalls) and a tour of the States supporting Led Zeppelin, she quit the group. “I was exhausted,” she says. “In the four years together, we had worked constantly with only one week off. There was amazing camaraderie but I’d had enough.”

After Gomelsky introduced her to jazzer Keith Tippetts’ music at the 100 Club, she recalls, “we became inseparable, like magnets.” Thereafter, she embraced the possibilities of vocal improv on highly regarded solo LPs and with groups, most notably Centipede, Ovary Lodge and the Ark. In addition, there have been collaborations with Maggie Nicols and Carla Bley, tributes to Robert Wyatt and numerous educational workshops at home and abroad. Famously, she also re-recorded This Wheel’s On Fire for sitcom Absolutely Fabulous in 1992. As for the future, she admits it’s been hard. “I was broken,” she says. “But I’ve been recording with friends. I’m still doing things, still learning. There’s a magic in improv that’s unexplained, that never goes.”

Lois Wilson

> “I hated the constant attention, of being on show.”
> **JULIE TIPPETTS**

LOADED DRISCOLL

Julie madly, deeply (three times).

Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity

Streetnoise

(POLYDOR, 1969)

Driscoll channels Nina and Aretha but transcends both, her bird-in-flight wail swooping and soaring in call and response to Auger’s Hammond on covers including Light My Fire and such stunning originals as her chilling anti-war protest Czechoslovakia.

Julie Tippetts

Sunset Glow

(UTOPIA, 1975)

Over atmospheric jazz-rock-prog harmonic deconstructions by a simpatico band of high-profile Canterbury scenesters, Tippetts communicates emotional extremes through spontaneous, wordless melodies and spellbinding improv-collages.

Keith & Julie Tippett – Couple In Spirit

Sound On Stone

(DISCUS, 2023)

Possibly her greatest work. Tippetts’s responses to her late husband’s solo piano pieces are at times overwhelming, with grief and loss palpable in her harrowing vocalisations. But there is hope and romance in the abstract dramas too.

Getty, Julie Archer

LUKAS NELSON
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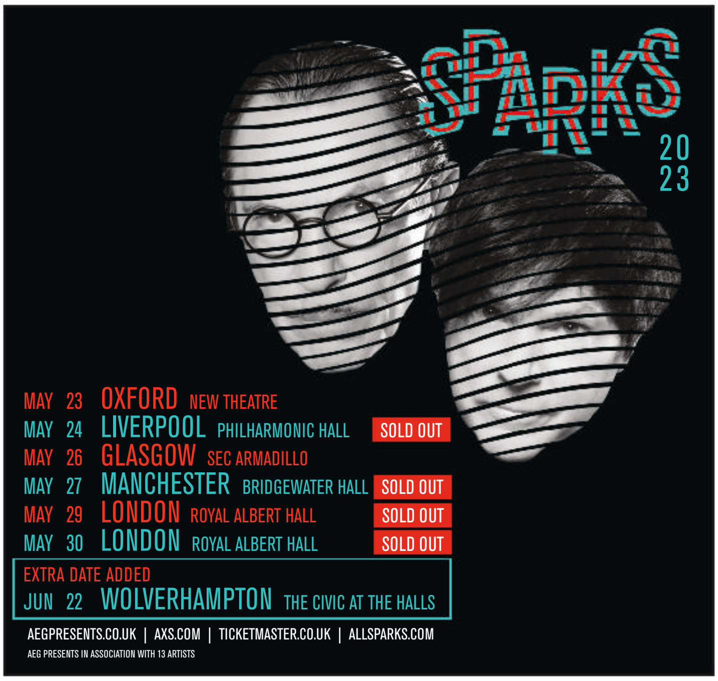

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MAY 26 GLASGOW SEC ARMADILLO
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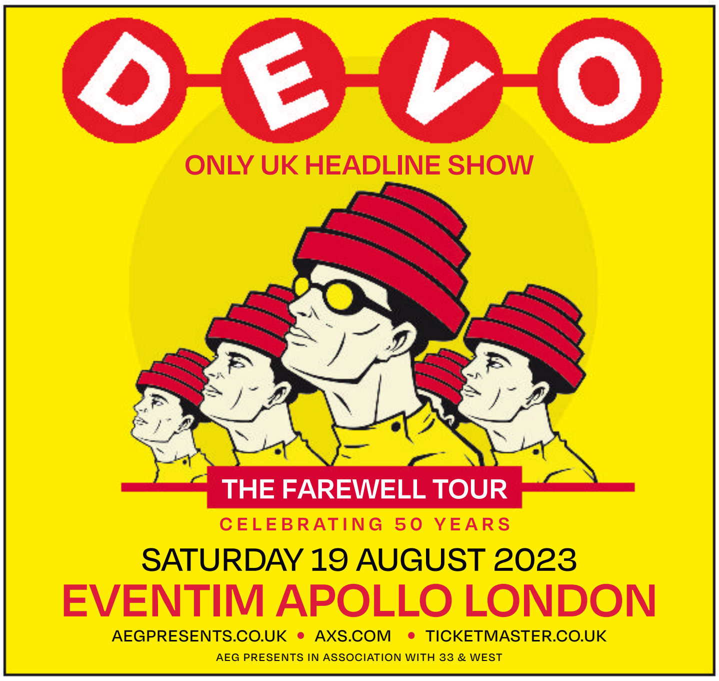

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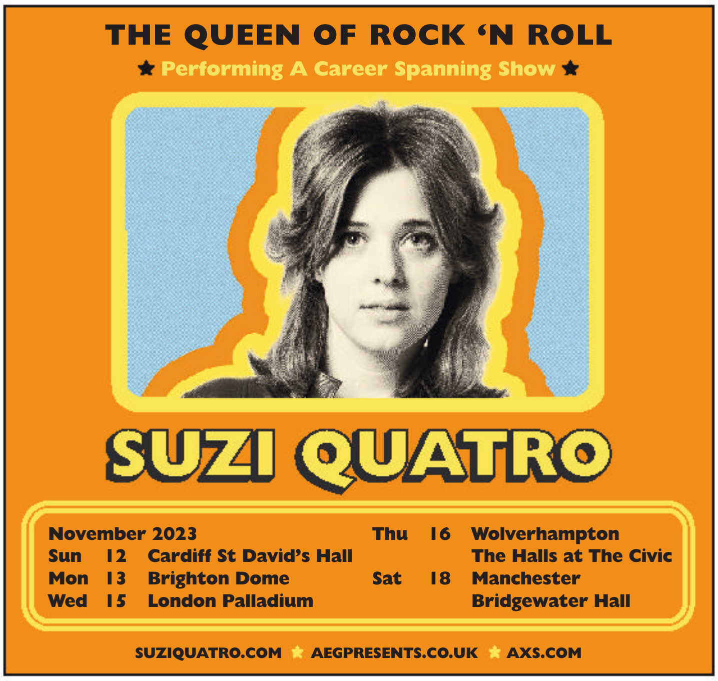

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“Everyone told me I sounded exactly like Richard Thompson.”
OWEN WILLIAMS

Full disclosure: The Tubs (with Owen Williams, second right, George Nicholls, far left) take it to the bridge.

Maria Cecilia Tedemalm

MEET THE TUBS, BUZZSAW FOLK ROCKERS WITH A FINE LINE IN DIRTY LAUNDRY

“I GET A SICK enjoyment out of finding the most embarrassing aspects of myself, my dirty laundry, and airing it in public,” says Owen Williams, singer/guitarist with confessional folk rockers The Tubs. How dirty does Williams’ laundry get? The title track to his band’s oversharing debut album, *Dead Meat*, concerns a groinal rash Williams was suffering. “I have OCD, and that’s often based in weird shame, so there’s some therapeutic effect in sharing things like that,” he explains. “Doing it within a pop song where the melodies are nice brings a little joy to it, at least.”

As a child, Williams remembers finding it “really embarrassing” when his mother, folk-singer Charlotte Greig, would sing folk songs around the house. “Then I hit puberty and suddenly became obsessed with music.” He and his friends in their hometown of Cardiff spent their days “illegally downloading tonnes of music” and, by the age of 16, had formed pun-loving noisers Joanna Gruesome. That band was the first in a seemingly endless parade of groups formed within their friendship cohort, including Ex-Vöid, Sniffany & The Nits, The GN Band and The Snivellers, many existing concurrently. “I’m always in at least four bands at any one time, and it ruins my life,” Williams sighs.

The Tubs began after the cohort had relocated to London, where Williams and guitarist George Nicholls were living as “sanctioned squatters” in a soon-to-be-demolished police station. “The plan was to sound like [cult ’80s indie group] Cleaners From Venus and Australian jangle,” says Nicholls, with Felt, folk and US college rock also inspirations. Williams, meanwhile, found himself “writing lyrics that were funnier and weirder than what I was writing for the singers in my other groups, and leaning in to my real accent when I sang. Everyone told me I sounded exactly like Richard Thompson. The other groups tended towards genre homage, but The Tubs reflects my personality.”

The songs of *Dead Meat* lay that personality bare, as Williams documents obsession, doomed love and self-loathing with unsparing honesty, over buzzsaw folk rock. Mental illness is a recurrent motif, though Williams resists being “sentimental” over the subject. The self-flagellating Sniveller is about his “habit in a relationship of behaving like a little worm, to manipulate the other person,” he says. “I want to write about how bad mental health can make you a prick. There’s nothing virtuous about it. I don’t want to trivialise it by saying I’m empowered by it, or that ‘OCD is my superpower’. Although, if The Tubs get big, then maybe it is.”

If they don’t, Williams will keep plugging away regardless. “Even when being in a band ruins my relationships and keeps me poor, I never think, Maybe it’s time to pack it in,” he says. “I do see people give up and get a marketing job and live in a nice flat rather than a disused police station, and sometimes that gives me existential angst. But usually I’m like, What a fucking loser. Being in bands is like a physical compulsion for me.”

Stevie Chick

The Tubs’ Dead Meat is out now on Trouble In Mind.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Richard Thompson, Sebadoh, The Feelies
- An early back-story for The Tubs claiming they formed while holidaying at a Welsh caravan park was, they now confess, a lie. “We’ve always told tall tales about how our bands formed,” admits Williams. “With Joanna Gruesome, I said we met at an anger management class, or on a wine-tasting holiday,” says Nicholls.
- The group have been friends since high school. “There’s a weird sibling thing going on,” admits Williams. “We’re pretty horrible to each other a lot of the time. In Joanna Gruesome, [singer Lan McArdle] acted as a kind of buffer to stop us descending into teenage boy shit.” “But then she got sucked into it too,” says Nicholls. “We’re all supportive of each other now, though.”

KEY TRACKS

- I Don’t Know How It Works
- Illusion Pt. II
- Sniveller

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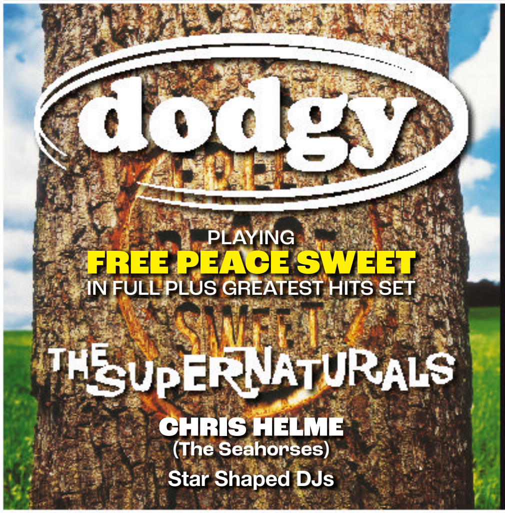

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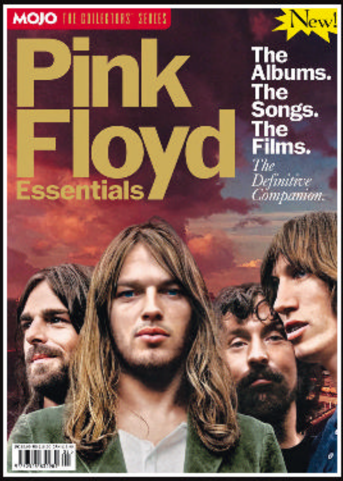

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FETED BY BOB DYLAN AND BILL CALLAHAN, SARABETH TUCEK RETURNS AT LAST – AS SBT!

THE THIRD album by singer-songwriter Sarabeth Tucek opens with a devastating line courtesy of her mother, Joan, as she hands her an old photograph. "It is the way I wish you could have always stayed," she says, "fearless and full of love."

As Tucek – now operating as SBT – makes clear, however, that's not how life works. *Joan Of All* is her first record since 2011's *Get Well Soon*, that delay suggesting its existence was never a given. "When I stopped writing music it was at a time in my life when I really had to figure out whether or not I was going to have children," explains Tucek, fighting through a cold at home in Los Angeles. "I kind of just put everything else to the side. Around that time, I became pregnant, then I miscarried, and then I was convinced that the only thing I wanted to do with my life was become a mother. I think because that ended up being a difficult road, I blamed everything I had done, including music."

Despairing of "this bohemian existence fraught with anxiety and insecurity", she got a job doing costumes for film and TV, joined a union, bought a house – "a way to really care for myself." It was only during lockdown that the songs on *Joan Of All* started pouring out from her. "I really didn't know that I would ever come back to it," she says, "but it came back to me."

As she sings on 13th Street's never-go-home-again lament, Tucek was raised in New York – the mark of Lou Reed is upon her – but she mixes dirty rock'n'roll boulevards with West Coast haze and cosmic innerspace. She started writing songs when she moved to Los Angeles, meeting Bill Callahan through a friend. "I didn't know that I had made any impression upon Bill because he's very stoic," she says, and nearly "passed out" when he asked her to sing on 2003's *Supper*. Even heavier validation came after her self-titled 2007 debut, when one of her first gigs was opening for Bob Dylan in Massachusetts.

> "Music came back to me."
> **SARABETH TUCEK**

It has taken until now, however, to make "the thing she is most proud of in her life". Released on her Ocean Omen label, *Joan Of All* is remarkable emotional cartography, documenting "the whip and the lash" (as she sings on The Gift) with both analytical cool and almost hallucinogenic intensity. Tucek wears symbolic armour on the sleeve of *Joan Of All* – a representation of her struggles, of the way women are again "under siege", and a tribute to her "badass" therapist mother. She quotes Louise Gluck: "The hope is that if you live through it, there will be art on the other side."

"I didn't really expect there to be anything on the other side," Tucek says, "but it turns out there was."

Victoria Segal

SBT's Joan Of All is released by Ocean Omen on May 19.

FACT SHEET

- For Fans Of: Lou Reed, Bill Callahan, Aldous Harding
- As an associate of The Brian Jonestown Massacre, Tucek appears briefly in Ondi Timoner's 2004 documentary Dig!.
- As with many others who have met Bob Dylan, Tucek has developed "a voice" – a rasping, anecdote-enhancing impersonation. When she walked past his tour bus Dylan called, "Hey! What's the most exciting thing going on around here?" Taken aback, she answered, "I think it's you."

KEY TRACKS

- The Gift
- 13th Street
- The Tunnel

Trunk rock: Sarabeth Tucek, AKA SBT, delivers remarkable emotional cartography.

MOJO PLAYLIST

Getty

The month's best organic funk, garage pop and molten bossa.

1 ST. VINCENT AND THE ROOTS GLORY BOX

On Jimmy Fallon: Annie Clark, Questlove and band, plus a string section, come together for a torchier take on Portishead's '94 heart-barer.
Find it: *YouTube*

2 PETE TOWNSHEND CAN'T OUTRUN THE TRUTH

Pete's first solo 45 for aeons, a steel guitar country ramble recalls the inertia of lock-down and the necessity of busting out; proceeds to the Teenage Cancer Trust.
Find it: *YouTube*

3 LOCAL PSYCHO THE HURDY GURDY SONG

Jimmy from The KLF and Jem from The Pogues turn sirens, junglism and hurdy-gurdy into bug-eyed rave sounds for social unrest.
Find it: *streaming services*

4 LOU REED OPEN INVITATION

An out-take from 1984's *New Sensations*, this loose-fit groover crunches and slaps and finds Lou rhapsodising over Tai Chi (it "can make you healthy and sexier").
Find it: *streaming services*

KASSA OVERALL

5 KASSA OVERALL (FEAT. THEO CROKER) THE LAVA IS CALM

Newly signed to Warp, the Seattle rapper/jazzer's latest features trumpeter Croker on this molten bossa meditation.
Find it: *streaming services*

6 SHAKIN' STEVENS ALL YOU NEED IS GREED

Fifty-three years after his first record, Shaky brings a cold analysis of scorched earth financialisation over a lean hillbilly prowl.
Find it: *streaming services*

7 MV & EE FREE RANGE

Ambient Funkadelic? Can In Dub? Backwoods sitar recitation? This 19-minute psych-out from the first couple of New Weird America is all that and more.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

8 EL NIÑO DIABLO HOUSE OF JUJU

Reverberant retro-electro from the Berlin-based electronic artist, with downbeat, Weatherall-esque psych grooves.
Find it: *streaming services*

9 DAMIAN O'NEILL MÁS O MENOS (THE LIMIÑANAS REMIX)

Ex-Undertones guitarist and the groovy French garage pop duo meet over Gainsbourg-esque cinematics.
Find it: *streaming services*

10 NUSANTARA BEAT SABILULUNGAN

Altin Gün-affiliated Dutch-Indonesian vintage-pop twang, as dug by MOJO at Leiden's most swinging Peel Slowly And See mini-fest in March.
Find it: *YouTube*

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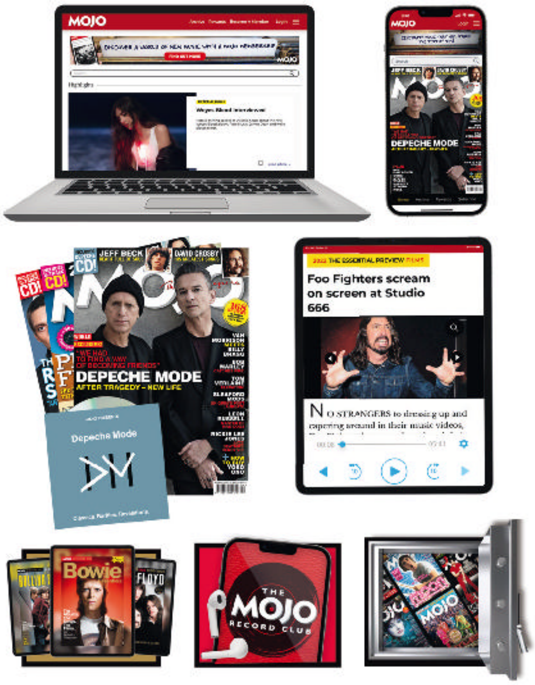
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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

The Clash's **bass smasher** and **style icon** on reggae roots, **punk violence,** jail in Greenland and **his quirky new album.** But why do we never see him at award ceremonies? **"I don't want a pat on the back,"** insists **Paul Simonon**.

Interview by **PAT GILBERT** • Portrait by **TOM OLDHAM**

ON A SUNNY FEBRUARY AFTERNOON, PAUL Gustave Simonon opens the door of his home in Paddington, shooing away his two dogs Snoop and Peanut. With a firm handshake and trademark Terry-Thomas grin, the bass player ushers MOJO into his lair, a modest three-floor mews house that doubles as his painting studio and rehearsal room. Art books and pictures line the walls, but apart from three guitars – including his battered Clash-era Fender Precision with 'PAUL' carved into its body – there's little to suggest he's the survivor of the world's pre-eminent international punk group.

Simonon's disdain for the trappings of success almost borders on the ascetic: he doesn't own a TV, or a car, though he does ride a black Triumph Bonneville motorbike, which squats outside the front door. "The trouble is you can only go 20 miles an hour around here," he grumbles. "It's unnerving when people are jogging past you while you're riding along."

Born in December 1955 to a librarian mother and a half-Belgian ex-soldier "who had a million different jobs," Simonon was raised mostly in Brixton and Ladbroke Grove, two locales that exposed him at an early age to the emerging black British culture that The Clash would so enthusiastically seize upon. A love for his London has heavily coloured his life and work – not just with his signature punk-reggae song, The Guns Of Brixton, but also his moody oil paintings (most recently scenes from Tyburnia, influenced in part by Walter Sickert) and millennial, music hall-flavoured project with Damon Albarn, The Good, The Bad & The Queen.

Today, the dashing style icon, still visually striking at 67 in fedora and pin-stripes, is here to promote *Can We Do Tomorrow Another Day?*, a delightful album of Latin-meets-reggae music made with Galen Ayers, the singer-songwriter daughter of Soft Machine's Kevin Ayers. Throughout our 90-minute conversation, punctuated by a visit from his new female collaborator, Simonon is wry and humorous, with the vibe of a mischievous schoolboy who also holds serious and trenchant views.

References to politics and history pepper our summit, culminating in Simonon's tale – delivered in distinctive, croaky south London tones – of his participation in a Greenpeace action in 2011, which involved boarding an oil rig at sea and spending a month banged up in a Greenland jail.

"This is what me and Joe Strummer used to do," he says of our interview set-up on two facing sofas, with Peanut in between. "We'd lie there and drink red wine all night, talking and playing music. One night I came home from seeing Anthony Newley in Scrooge with a signed CD of the show. Joe said, 'Come on, let's play it!' I loved Joe…"

Whose idea was it to team up as Galen And Paul and make the *Can We Do Tomorrow Another Day?* album?

I was over in Mallorca on and off during lockdown, painting and writing songs, and was going to make a record with some local guys. One was ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Manics' **Nicky Wire** on the height of low-end cool.

"He's The Clash's visual centre and a massively important cog in the chain of musicality. On Lost In The Supermarket, Lover's Rock etc, Paul's got real Motown capability, so fluid, never in the way. As soon as I saw him I knew I was going be a bass player: the tallest, coolest, the best cheekbones."

Tom Oldham (2)

a gardener, another a filmmaker… Back in the UK, a friend said Galen was staying with him. I said, "I know Galen…" It was interesting because she was brought up in Mallorca, so we knew some of the same friends and places. Galen speaks perfect Spanish – well, Mallorquí. It was perfect. I'd been listening to a lot of yé-yé girls 45s and wanted to have another European language on the record, not just me hollering away.

Yours and Galen's characters on the album are quite amusing and playful. There's definitely a Nancy & Lee vibe on the track I've Never Had A Good Time… In Paris.

Galen had nowhere to stay, so I said, "I can turn the middle floor here into a place for you." As there's no television here, we'd sit round the table, chat and come up with songs. We ended up bantering as if we were a couple, so that aspect of the album is completely natural. Simon Tong [TGTBTQ guitarist, who plays on the album] said it's a bit like Bernard Cribbins and Brigitte Bardot singing together. I was like, "Oh, thanks…" (*laughs*)

You had a very unsettled upbringing. Aged 10, you were transplanted from a rented flat in Brixton to Siena in Tuscany. Did that experience instil a love of all things Mediterranean?

In a way – six months in Siena, six months in Roma. What happened was, around 1964 my parents separated. And it was devastating. My stepfather moved in and we didn't really get on… I missed my father too much, I was too much of a daddy's boy, I guess. Then my stepfather won a scholarship to study music in Italy. Me and my brother would end up going to the cinema to see spaghetti westerns or scrumping for apples. Roma was very different, lots of scallywags running around. We'd spend a lot of days in the [Protestant Cemetery], playing with Keats and Shelley…

So was that where your love of spaghetti western soundtracks came from?

Yes. My musical education came from that and the reggae and ska I heard growing up in Brixton. A lot also came from my dad – Françoise Hardy and the soundtrack to Black Orpheus, which is Brazilian music. He had a bit of everything: classical, The Beatles, The Kinks.

There's a picture of you as a kid looking cool in an American Civil War Union Army cap. Where did your sense of style come from?

My dad, who was a keen painter, was from a military background. Before bed, it was inspection time, as if you were on parade. You would never cross my dad. But though he was terrifying, in the same breath he'd tell you, "The height of men's clothing in Europe was during the Napoleonic Wars…" He'd lied about his age and signed up to the Royal Fusiliers and was eventually posted to Kenya, where he began to question a lot of things – like having to burn down villages, looking for Mau Mau leaders. Style-wise, there were also the Windrush guys in Brixton, who looked like cowboys in films. They would sit out on the corner of Somerleyton Road, with a hat and an orange suit – you'd never see an orange suit in London at that time…

You became a bit of a handful in your teens and went to live with your father in Ladbroke Grove. What was it like back then?

Pretty rough. You needed to know street tactics to survive. I had got into the skinhead thing and was getting involved in a lot of 'light mischief', you might say, hopping off school a lot. I'd sneak back home at my mum's and watch black-and-white films like Brighton Rock and then all the cooking programmes. That's where I learned how to cook (*laughs*). It was a tougher regime at my dad's; I slept in the room where he used to paint. At one point there was no art teacher at our school, Isaac Newton, because it was so run down, so we had to go to Ladbroke Girls School, which was brilliant! A great art teacher, Miss Andros, helped me get into art college [the Byam Shaw in Notting Hill Gate] with a scholarship.

Nick Kent wrote that in the mid-'70s you were employed as a David Bowie decoy. Is that true?

(*Laughs*) Really? It sounds like a good job! I think he's taking the piss. I did have dyed orange hair, which was spiky and short. It was good timing because of punk. When I first met Johnny Rotten we had almost the same haircut. Didn't they call the punks "The bastard sons of David Bowie"?

Did you like Bowie? The main pre-punk musical influences you talk about most are reggae ones.

I liked Bowie a lot. When I was living with Mick Jones in the squat in Acton with Viv Albertine, there was the album on Deram, with Please Mr Gravedigger and Little Bombardier, which I played to death. It sounded like Anthony Newley, who I knew from Ed Stewpot's kids radio show. But I was more into Alex Harvey than Bowie, and later Kilburn And The High Roads and Dr. Feelgood. Also, I'd hang out at Ted Carroll's place [Rock On] on Golborne Road. There were always these giant Teddy Boys there listening to records, so that's probably where I first heard Brand New Cadillac.

The Clash story starts near here, in Praed Street, where in late 1976 you accompanied a friend to an audition for Mick Jones's group The London SS.

Yeah, they asked me to sing [Jonathan Richman's] Roadrunner and [The Standells'] Barracuda: "I'm a young barracuda, don't mess with me…" or whatever. I couldn't relate to that at all, and I'd never heard of Jonathan Richman. I was later told that [manager] Bernie Rhodes said, "Mick, get rid of your group and start a band with that bloke that just left." We started hanging out and Mick taught me to play bass.

A LIFE IN PICTURES

The right profile: Paul down the years.

1 Young gun of Brixton: style icon Paul Simonon, aged 10, in his Union Army cap.

2 A riot of their own: The Clash (from left) Joe Strummer, Mick Jones and Simonon, near the Roundhouse, Camden, London, 1978.

3 Bass face: Paul gives it some on-stage at London's Rainbow, 1977.

4 Westway to the world: The Clash (from left) Strummer, Topper Headon, Simonon, Jones in '78.

5 Call the cops: John Lydon and Paul shred a copy of the NME during the video shoot for Big Audio Dynamite's Medicine Show, 1986.

6 Cuban heels: Havana 3AM (from left) Simonon, Nigel Dixon, Travis Williams and Gary Myrick, France, 1990.

7 *Merrie* men: The Good, The Bad & The Queen (from left) Simon Tong, Simonon, Damon Albarn and Tony Allen, 2018.

8 All at sea: Greenpeace activist Paul (far right) off the Greenland coast, 2011.

9 With new musical partner Galen Ayers, 2023.

10 "I suppose I was the practical joker in the band": Paul, London, 1979.

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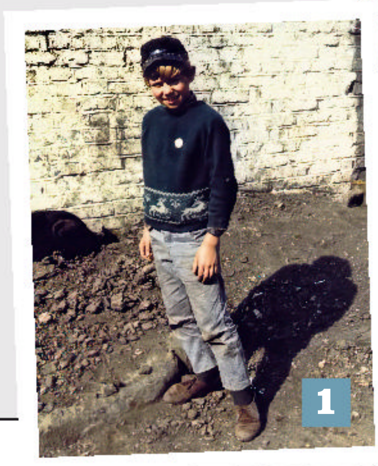
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Courtesy Paul Simonon, © Steve Morgan/Greenpeace, Søren Solkær Starbird, Adrian Boot/urbanimage.tv (3), Getty, Photo by Sheila Rock/Shutterstock (2), Dan Donovan

I would play along with reggae records, and *The Ramones* when it came out. Me and Sid Vicious both used to play along with that. It's good for the engine – (*mimes picking furiously*) "der-der-der-der…"

You and Bernard Rhodes oversaw The Clash's T-shirts, clothes, artwork. Did he see something in you that perhaps you didn't see yourself?

I think he thought I had a good look. And also that I didn't come with any luggage; I was a nobody that had just come in from the desert, as it were. Without Bernie or Mick, I wouldn't have got to where I am now. I suppose I was also the practical joker in the band. Joe? He was like an elder brother, really. I never had an argument with Joe in the whole of The Clash. I had rows with Mick.

That time in summer 1977, with *The Clash* coming out and the White Riot tour, what was it like being caught up in the whirlwind of punk energy and violence?

It was exhilarating, it kept you on your toes, but it was always like that in London. I remember walking up Shaftesbury Avenue one day and a Teddy Boy strode over and said his wife had a miscarriage because she'd been beaten up by some punks. It was just an excuse for a fight.

You once quipped in the early days of The Clash that you didn't know who the current Prime Minister was. Yet you seemed very politically informed in a BBC2 interview in spring 1978 about the rise of the National Front.

Put it this way, my dad was a member of the Communist Party. He taught me about Wat Tyler and people like that. So I was quite savvy. When – as I like to think of it – Stalin was indoors watching TV, I was outside delivering Communist Party pamphlets for him to the local community. Reggae music was influential with its lyrics. When Burning Spear and Big Youth came out, it became much more about black power, the black struggle. That was big at the parties I went to as a teenager.

> "[Joining **The Clash**,] I didn't come with **any luggage**; I was a nobody that had **just come in from the desert.**"

With your first and most well-known Clash song, The Guns Of Brixton, you've said that you saw Joe and Mick were getting songwriting royalties, and wanted in on the act. Were there earlier Simonon songs?

Well, I had always tried to write songs. But how could you compete with Strummer-Jones? When we were in Vanilla Studios working on material for *London Calling*, I came up with the bass line and the others joined in, and it developed from there. The lyrics… there was a real suspicion in Ladbroke Grove that your flat would be raided. The SPG, the 'sus' laws, that paranoia permeated the area. And The Harder They Come was a big influence, the film and the book.

Jimmy Cliff covered Guns Of Brixton…

I know, what a twist. He did a great version. The version I really like is the Nouvelle Vague one. What a great voice [French singer Camille Dalmais].

What was the highlight of The Clash for you?

Going to Jamaica, for the first time [in April 1980]. Being in Studio One, where all these great records were made, it was amazing, and we were dead lucky having Mikey Dread around, though we all had to pile into his Renault and skedaddle when we heard some gunmen were on their way to the studio, after money. He introduced me to all these people, like [singer] Edi Fitzroy… We went to Prince Buster's shop, which was a bit dusty by this period. It made a full connection to my growing up and background.

The picture of you smashing your Fender Precision is one of the most iconic in music. What does it represent to you?

I dunno… you can read a lot into it. But I certainly didn't smash it up to impress my girlfriend, as someone once said. I lost my temper as it was a seated venue, and you had this thing with the bouncers telling everyone to sit down. So it was a bit of a subdued atmosphere and the sound was a bit shit, so I just thought, "Fuck it."

For you, where would be a fitting place for its remnants?

It's on loan to the Museum Of London, so as far as I'm concerned it can stay with them. It always reminds of some fragment from the cross or something.

Topper Headon was fired in 1982, Mick followed in 1983… were you zen about The Clash's intra-band turbulence?

I don't know how to put it politely… (*Pause*) Mick had his way of doing things. He liked to be in his hotel watching TV and he loved having room service – and I don't blame him. It was probably like it was for him at home with his nan, who'd cook his dinner while he watched TV. For me and Joe, we'd like to go out and

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GREENPEACE

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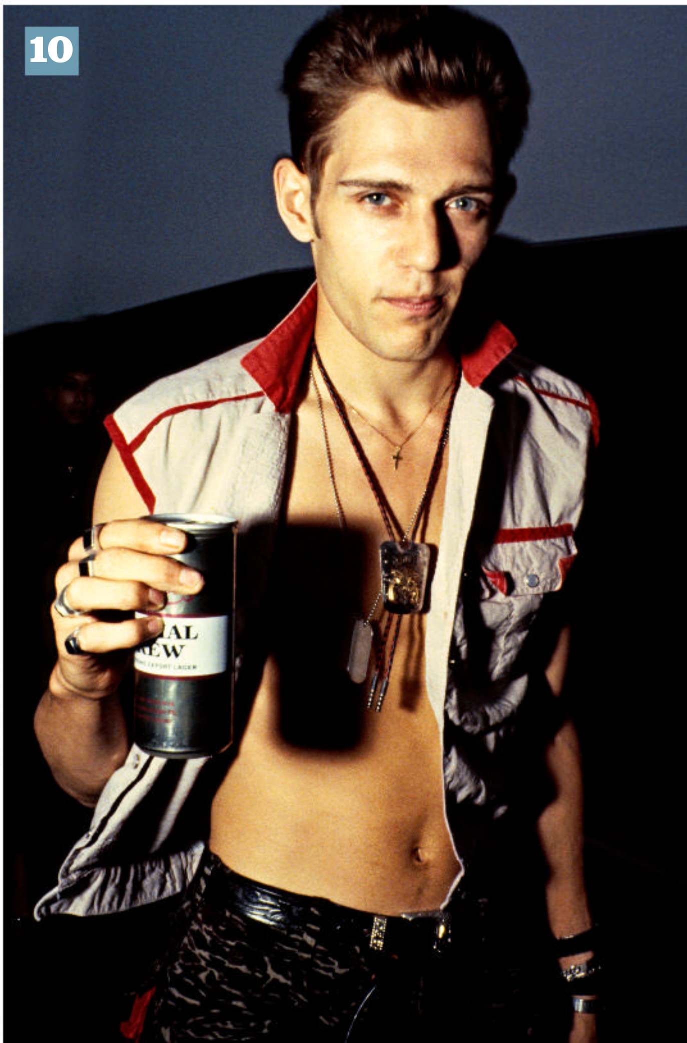

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Paul's boutique: Simonon selects another disc, Paddington, London, February 21, 2023.

“**Mick [Jones] said,** ‘You'll get a million pounds.’ I said, ‘I don't want **a fucking million pounds.’**”

explore the town. And Mick did get grumpy. That famous line from Strummer that Mick was “like Elizabeth Taylor in a filthy mood”. After six or seven years we'd had enough of it. We looked at each other and said, “OK, then, shall we cut our right arm off?” Because Mick was so important.

How had the atmosphere in the group changed?

We were 27 by then or whatever, we were grown men. I was losing patience with Mick and he was probably pissed off with me too. I didn't feel good about it. But I'm not going to apologise because he became a brat. But then, maybe we were all about to become brats. We were so mollycoddled by then, people running around after us all the time on tour. We were getting too pampered. So it was a good way of getting un-pampered.

What do you think of the five-piece Clash Mk II today?

The best thing was the busking tour [in May 1985]. It was as exciting as the White Riot tour. But it took on another agenda that was led by Bernie and Kosmo [Vinyl, band aide]. With [*Cut The Crap*], they suggested I go back to painting in New York, maybe as a ruse to get me out of the studio so Joe could finish the album. I said to Joe, “We've never had an argument, so I'll let you finish the record how you want.” But then when I got back from New York, Joe had left the sessions and Bernie had taken over. I didn't hear from Joe for a good few weeks. Then my dad had a serious car accident, which killed his wife. He ended up in hospital with a cage holding his head together. Then The Clash ended.

You went to El Paso in 1987 to get ideas for your next band, Havana 3AM. Why there?

I went with Nigel Dixon of Whirlwind. Bernie said go somewhere to get something together. So we spun a globe and stuck a finger out and it landed on El Paso. It could have been Bombay! That would have been interesting… Me and Nigel bought a couple of second-hand Harleys and lived there for a couple of months, riding round in our leathers, drinking beer. It was like being in a western. Bernie came to visit us and he found it quite tough. We went into a bar and there was a pool-cue fight going on behind us. He left the next day.

During this period you ended up playing on Bob Dylan's *Down In The Groove*. Not perhaps a move people expected…

I knew Bob because he used to come to Clash shows. I turned up with Steve Jones, and Bob said, “Here's a song,” so I figured out a bass line, then he said, “Here's another song,” then, “Here's another,” by which time I'd forgotten the first one. It was bloody hard work. We didn't think we'd be there long and had arranged to meet up with some other motorcyclists at the studio. We looked up and there were 30 blokes in leather jackets in the control room, with the engineer looking slightly nervous.

Steve Jones and John Lydon settled in LA. Did you not fancy a life over there?

I missed London too much. I missed the seasons, the culture, the rain, the gasometer on the canal.

Nigel Dixon was diagnosed with cancer, which effectively ended Havana 3AM after just one self-titled album in 1991.

He told me, “I've got six months to live.” He had malignant melanoma. When he died, I went in with a friend and we dressed him up in a leather jacket, washed his hair and combed it back into a quiff. After he was cremated, the jar rattled with all the studs and the buckles in it, which was kind of nice. Yeah… it was over for me, really, musically.

Tom Oldham

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There were always rumours of a Clash re-formation in the early '90s. What actually happened?

There was talk between me, Joe, Mick and Mick's manager, Gary Kurfirst, who was looking after Mick in B.A.D. But it didn't happen for lots of reasons. Like what? I was getting pissed off with Mick. I said, "I don't want to do it." Mick said, "Why not? You'll get a million pounds." That pissed me off even more. So I said, "I don't want a fucking million pounds." I think he was a bit shocked that I wasn't keen on the idea. And I don't think Joe would have really wanted to do it either. For me The Clash story was over. Joe and I really liked Lawrence Of Arabia, and I liked T.E. Lawrence's book, The Mint [where Lawrence shuns fame for an anonymous life as an 'erk' in the RAF].

You went back to painting full-time…

Yes, and my sons were born, Louis and Claude. They'd be with me in my studio when I was working. Which was fun. Especially when one of your paintbrushes would fly past you like an arrow, because your bigger paintbrush had been made into a bow with a bit of string.

When The Clash were due to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003, there was more talk of a reunion…

They wanted us to play on the stage at the ceremony. I said, "I'm not doing that." So Joe said, "OK, maybe we'll get Mani to do it." I said, "OK, go on then…" I had no interest in those kind of awards things. I don't want a pat on the back.

Strummer died suddenly at Christmas 2002, before the reunion issue could be resolved. You spoke at Joe's funeral – was that hard?

Yes. (*Pause*) Some time before that, we met up at the Earl Percy pub in Ladbroke Grove one night, and Joe said he had something really important to tell me. The gravitas of the way he said it, in retrospect I wonder if it was something about his heart. I know when you sign a record contract you take a medical. Maybe he discovered something? He could have died at one or 90. It happened to be 50. (*Sighs*) Bullseye.

How did Damon Albarn manage to draw you back into music with The Good, The Bad & The Queen in 2006?

I met Damon through Chrissie Hynde upstairs at the Earl Percy. Joe had just got married [in 1995]. She instigated a group hug with Joe, me and Damon. I saw him around occasionally, as he lived in the area. Then he was in Africa doing a project with Tony Allen but it wasn't working, so he came back to London and my name came up. Before long we were hanging out a lot, talking about the history of the area, Tyburn, there were a lot of London references. We discovered a shared love for English musical hall and that shaped the project.

FOUR STRINGS GOOD

Three reasons to hail Paul Simonon, by **Pat Gilbert**.

THE TIMELESS MASTERPIECE

The Clash

★★★★★

London Calling

(CBS, 1979)

The Clash
LONDON CALLING

Pennie Smith's dramatic bass-smashing cover image fed into the mythology already growing around its subject as a motorbike-booted punk James Dean. But the album's sleeve also drew attention to Simonon's increasing musical centrality to The Clash, as he began to develop his own bass lines, leaning heavily on reggae, ska and rockabilly passions – most powerfully on his own spaghetti western-roots reggae mash-up, The Guns Of Brixton.

THE REGGAEBILLY ONE-OFF

Havana 3AM

★★★

Havana 3AM

(IRS, 1991)

Overlooked today as on its release, Simonon's sole album with his Pérez Prado-referencing post-Clash outfit was true to his school: mucho rockabilly twanging (courtesy of ex-Whirlwind frontman Nigel Dixon), jerky-reggae beats and moody Western saloon-bar machismo. But one-dimensional it's not, with imaginative arrangements and the ageless Reach The Rock and tumbleweed instrumental Hey Amigo hitting the bullseye. Worth another spin.

THE VISION OF ENGLANDE

The Good, The Bad & The Queen

★★★★

Merrie Land

(STUDIO 13, 2018)

MERRIE LAND

TGTBTQ's self-titled debut from 2007 established the themes of Albarn and Simonon's pet project: modern, fusionist London seen through the distorted prism of olde worlde music hall. But the Wicca-invoking, Brexit-lamenting *Merrie Land* was even better: weirder, more complex, more reggae-ish, with Simonon pushing Albarn to up the quotient of seasick, picture palace Wurlitzer – "one of my favourite ever sounds," he tells MOJO.

You were described as "creative director" – the clothes, the look, the atmosphere, painting the backdrop with St Paul's ablaze…

I was just totally absorbed by the project and the sentiment of the record. Simon Tong is my favourite guitarist in the world, Tony Allen was brilliant. I love Walter Sickert. Those titles like "Off To The Pub…" He painted music hall scenes, so that all fitted.

Damon then invited you and Mick to play in the *Plastic Beach*-era Gorillaz. How was that?

It was nice being with Mick again, and there was no pressure on us, really, as it was under Damon and Jamie [Hewlett]'s banner. We met all these characters, Lou Reed, De La Soul, Bobby Womack.

In 2011, you were involved in a Greenpeace action that involved boarding an oil rig after weeks at sea on a boat. Was that an extension of your politics in The Clash?

My friend Frank [Hewetson] has worked for Greenpeace for years and talked about getting me involved. But he said, "As you have no skill as such you'll have to help cook and clean the toilets." I was below deck from early in the morning until eight at night every day for weeks. At one point, we thought the Danish navy were going to storm the ship. When we boarded the oil rig, they called the police in Greenland, who arrived by helicopter and took us to prison. When we got there everyone was going nuts, banging on the cell doors with tin cups. "Fuck off Greenpeace!" We were put in a separate wing with some locals and this bloke came over and said, "I want to fight you." I thought, "Why doesn't he pick on Frank, he's bigger than me?" But it came to nothing.

You'd been in jail cells during The Clash era. Was several weeks in prison different?

I took on the duties of cooking for everyone, did some painting in my cell, read John Steinbeck books. Towards the end I felt like escaping – I figured I could climb down the gap between the walls and make it to a fishing village. But Frank said, "No, you can't go. You haven't done anything wrong."

Then you went back to painting and plotting TGTBTQ's second album, 2018's *Merrie Land*…

Yeah, Damon said, "We'd better make an album but we need a producer." I said, "I have someone in mind…" – and that was Tony Visconti. Because of the way Damon was singing, it reminded me of Bowie and his Anthony Newley thing. Tony was brilliant, he helps you make the album you want, rather than put his imprint on it. And now he's produced the Galen & Paul record.

After all your adventures, any regrets?

(*Thinks*) OK, in Teesside on the White Riot tour I'd had too much to drink beforehand, and when I hit the first note on-stage I fell over backwards into my amplifier. Joe thought it was funny; Mick didn't. Then the crowd parted like the Red Sea and clashed in this big battle. So thankfully nobody noticed…

Can We Do Tomorrow Another Day?, by Galen & Paul, is released on May 19 by Sony Music.

SOLDIER of the HEART

Junkie, jailbird, genius: tragic **JUDEE SILL** loved hard, lived fast and wrote songs like no one else. As a film about her life looks set to hip a whole new audience, friends and lovers help MOJO tell her story. "She liked the edge," they tell **GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN**. "She just went over."

Portrait by **HENRY DILTZ**.

THE OCCASION SEEMED SO AUSPICIOUS THAT JUDEE SILL curled her hair.

In the winter of 1971, the 27-year-old singer-songwriter accepted an invitation to sing at the Beverly Hills Hotel, a paradisiacal hideaway for celebrities. Warner Brothers' publishing arm was throwing its Christmas party there, and Sill seemed the ideal booking: a rising star whose debut album, released that September, was the first on David Geffen's new Asylum label, with a face familiar from a billboard near The Source, Hollywood's super-hip vegetarian restaurant. She arrived, however, in the opposite of style.

"It's valet parking, with this line of Bentleys and limos. My old Nash Rambler starts steaming," Tommy Peltier tells MOJO. Three years earlier, while Sill lived in a Cadillac, she and Peltier, a jazz cornetist, had become firm friends and occasional lovers. This was the only time he ever saw her with curls.

"I hand the valet guy the keys, wish him luck," he continues. "Judee grabs her guitar and hopes nobody sees her."

The pair remained so ill at ease that Sill suggested a fix – namely, several joints. Peltier baulked at getting high amid high society, but they slipped behind some curtains and puffed, feet poking out comically at the bottom. Smoke trailed them; a photographer snapped their picture, blissfully high. "I would never *think* to do anything like that," says Peltier, laughing. "But Judee always liked to take it to the end."

Extremes defined Sill's life, work, and death, at the age of 35 in 1979. Before signing with Asylum, she had been a bank-robbing, theology-reading reformed heroin addict navigating recovery and attempting to extricate herself from a second marriage. Her recording career was brief but brilliant, a comet cutting across clear California skies. In less than two years, she released two incredible albums, *Judee Sill* and *Heart Food*, incomparable works of rococo elegance and redemptive longing.

Henry Diltz

A cross to bear: Judee Sill in February 1971. "She was real, and people are finally putting her on a pedestal," says sometime lover/life-long friend Tommy Peltier.

JUDEE SILL
on Asylum records & tapes
PACIFIC OUTDOOR

Sill communication: (clockwise from left) Judee and Tommy Peltier at a Christmas party in 1971; backstage at The Troubadour, LA, January 6, 1972; Asylum's billboard, November '71; (below) Sill's first two LPs and The Turtles' Judee-penned Lady-O 45.

JUDEE SILL
JUDEE SILL
HEART FOOD
LADY-O
(Judee Sill)
WW 334
WHITE WHALE
THE TURTLES

Tommy Peltier, Submarine Entertainment, Getty (4)

"She was more advanced than any of us – very sophisticated, very single-minded, absolutely unique," remembers J.D. Souther, another lover who temporarily became Sill's combative muse. "She wanted to be the best songwriter ever, bring the most light to the most people. I'd be hard pressed to name two albums with more meat on the bones."

Sill's dreams sputtered in a series of discarded sessions and toxic relationships. When her body was found a day after Thanksgiving in a rented North Hollywood room, dead from an overdose of codeine and cocaine, she owned enough clothes to fill a suitcase, her journals, and the Martin D-28 Graham Nash had gifted her. The death certificate labelled it suicide; her friends call it an accident. "She liked the edge," Peltier says. "She just went over."

In a saga suited to her songs' transcendent pleas, a confederation of fans, family members, and now filmmakers has slowly resurrected Sill's work. For decades, her import seemed a seedling, hidden in the records of Linda Ronstadt, Jim O'Rourke, or Beth Orton; it is now, suddenly, in bloom.

"I am so curious to know what she would've done had she stayed healthy," says Souther, who sighs when he admits he didn't know for months that Sill had died. "I knew all along she was like Van Gogh. Her importance would increase as time passed."

WHEN ANDY BROWN AND BRIAN LINDSTROM began work on their powerful new documentary, Lost Angel: The Genius Of Judee Sill, they weren't sure they should trust what the singer said about her youth.

In an April 1972 spread in Rolling Stone, she told Grover Lewis of violent altercations with her stepfather, a celebrated animator; armed robberies of liquor stores, Sill wielding the .38; a heroin habit so severe she swapped a car for smack in Mexico, smuggling it "in my cunt". Multiple arrests, occasional overdoses, turned tricks: Wasn't it all *too* salacious?

"Her friends told stories of how she made stuff up all the time, as a joke," admits Brown. "We were sceptical, obsessively trying to find confirmation of it all. *Everything* she said was true."

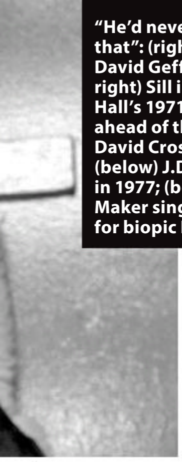
Music may have been Sill's first fascination. At three, she pounded at the piano in her father's roughneck Oakland bar. "I found out I could harmonise with myself," she told Lewis. But tragedy arrived early and often.

After her father, Milford, died of pneumonia a day shy of his 47th birthday, her mother, Oneta, returned to Los Angeles, marrying a wealthy but infamous alcoholic who "beat dogs", Sill remembered, and molested her. She wrote songs with a ukulele, but the atmosphere became oppressive. Her mother drank, growing bitter and violent. They shipped Sill to a private school where weed was widespread and crime ubiquitous. Still a teenager, Sill married – then divorced – on a lark.

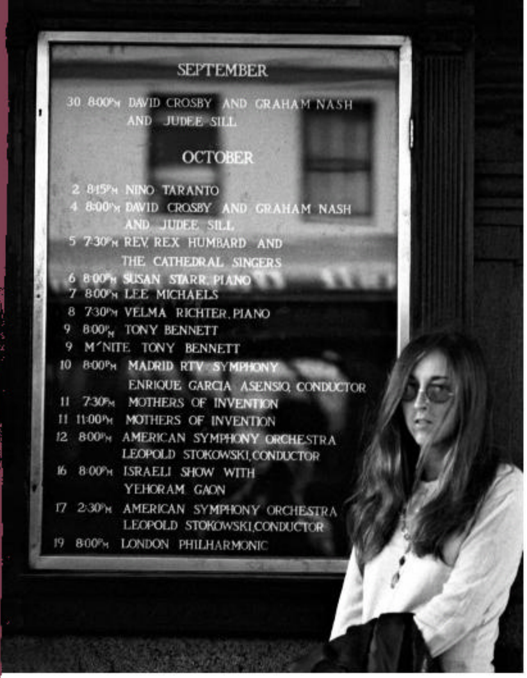
At Los Angeles Valley College, a small community college with ties to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, she again pursued music until circumstances interfered. Police busted Sill for some burglaries, exiling her to state reform school. She became chapel organist there, learning gospel lyrics and licks, and worked treacherous hours at a piano bar, becoming an early LSD enthusiast and an ardent upright bass player. Her mother died, leaving Sill an orphan.

Woe accumulated. Sill wed a pianist she'd met, Bob Harris. Together, she'd tell the Los Angeles Free Press's Chris Van Ness, they became "hopeless heroin addicts," forging, stealing, and hooking to sustain a $150-a-day habit. Numbed, she played bass obsessively, speckling the walls with blood from her mangled fingers. In February 1968, the law came knocking again, and she was jailed. When she tried calling her estranged brother Dennis, she learned the 28-year-old father of two had died earlier that month. Maybe the cops had come just in time.

"I knew that I had to clean myself up or stay in jail for the rest



"He'd never heard songs like that": (right) Asylum co-founder David Geffen, London, 1972; (far right) Sill in front of the Carnegie Hall's 1971 bulletin board, ahead of that night's show with David Crosby and Graham Nash; (below) J.D. Souther, on-stage in 1977; (bottom) 1971's …Cross Maker single and the poster for biopic Lost Angel.


SEPTEMBER
30 8:00PM DAVID CROSBY AND GRAHAM NASH AND JUDEE SILL
OCTOBER
2 8:15PM NINO TARANTO
4 8:00PM DAVID CROSBY AND GRAHAM NASH AND JUDEE SILL
5 7:30PM REV. REX HUMBARD AND THE CATHEDRAL SINGERS
6 8:00PM SUSAN STARR, PIANO
7 8:00PM LEE MICHAELS
8 7:30PM VELMA RICHTER, PIANO
9 8:00PM TONY BENNETT
9 M'NITE TONY BENNETT
10 8:00PM MADRID RTV SYMPHONY ENRIQUE GARCIA ASENSIO, CONDUCTOR
11 7:30PM MOTHERS OF INVENTION
11 11:00PM MOTHERS OF INVENTION
12 8:00PM AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI, CONDUCTOR
16 8:00PM ISRAELI SHOW WITH YEHORAM GAON
17 2:30PM AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI, CONDUCTOR
19 8:00PM LONDON PHILHARMONIC

> "She was more advanced than any of us – very single-minded, absolutely unique."
> J.D. SOUTHER

of my life," she said. "I was going to have to do something that was going to give me an ultimate thrill."

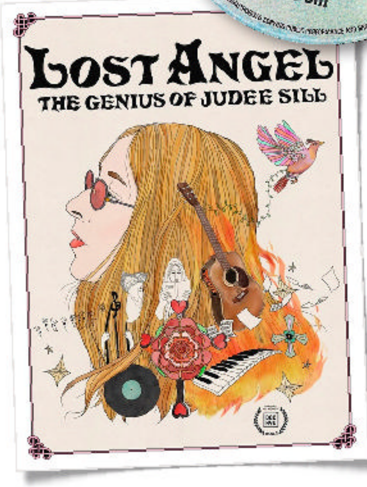
THE SONG RUSS GIGUERE HEARD WAS SO GOOD he couldn't move.

"One star remains in the false darkness/Have you met my man on love?" sang Jules Alexander, Giguere's roomie and bandmate in The Association. He was playing the organ tucked against the living-room window in their three-floor apartment. Giguere stayed still until he was finished.

"'Jules, did *you* write that?'" Giguere remembers saying. "'No, a girl named Judee Sill wrote that, and she's got a *bunch* more.'"

By 1969, Sill had been writing seriously for little more than a year. The Turtles had turned her Lady-O into a single, extending a small weekly contract. Out of prison, she'd inked an inch-long treble clef on her right upper arm, her anchor should she spin out. Another lover had told her how Pythagoras had reasoned that each musical key impacted emotion distinctly; she wanted her music to change lives, not just entertain. (She named her cat Pythagoras.)

ASYLUM RECORDS
April Music
Made in UK
45 RPM
K 13064
SIDE ONE
STEREO
Jesus Was A Cross Maker
Judee Sill


LOST ANGEL
THE GENIUS OF JUDEE SILL

Later, Giguere bumped into Sill, then dating Alexander, in their apartment, looking for a late-night snack. Both naked, they chatted, Sill inviting him to hear more songs at nearby Barnsdall Park. "I was *blown away*, amazed," says Giguere of the gig. "I thought, 'This girl's got to have a record deal.'"

Giguere made a plan: Sill would meet him on Monday at the Troubadour, where he'd get her on the docket for their famed hootenanny. The Association's former agent at William Morris, David Geffen, would watch from the stairs. "He had the same reaction," says Giguere. "He'd never heard songs like that."

Geffen had just launched his own company and decamped to Los Angeles with a list of clients and cronies that included Crosby, Stills & Nash and Joni Mitchell. He moved fast, signing an anxious Sill to Asylum after she played half a song at his office. He asked her what she wanted out of music. "How big is it possible to be?" she replied.

Sill moved fast, too, writing arrangements for a dozen songs in two weeks. By December 1970, she was in A&M Studio with Henry Lewy, a patient producer who had worked with The Association and on Mitchell's *Clouds*, plus a band that included drummer Hal Blaine and a small chamber ensemble.

When Sill stopped by Giguere's house before the first orchestral session, a Mercedes-Benz blocked her in; she backed into the car, pushed it free, and sped off. "Judee knew what she wanted," Giguere says, "and she got it."

The arrangements were restrained but complex, from the rhythmic shifts and webbed harmonies of Ridge Rider to the madrigal-like midsection of The Archetypal Man, her sublime evisceration of some flighty rascal. They finished in eight days.

Geffen, meanwhile, raved of his discovery to friends like Souther. In early 1971, Souther cruised down Melrose on his Triumph, strolling into a theatre where Sill was mid-set, performing for a dozen listeners. When a tourist demanded she play "that Judy Collins song," Sill snapped back: "First of all, that's not a Judy Collins song. Second, I'm going to play the fucking songs I want – *my songs*."

She ended up at Souther's house, where they stayed up late, "making googly eyes" and playing records. "She didn't like a lot of music, but the stuff she liked, she knew everything about," Souther remembers. "She knew Bach to the last bass note, everything Ray Charles had done. That was good enough for me."

SILL AND SOUTHER WERE BRIEFLY INSEPARABLE. But when she left town, Souther fell for Linda Ronstadt. Sill dubbed him an "unrepentant bastard," arriving one morning and plonking herself on his bed. She played him Jesus Was A Cross Maker. A turn on a novel they'd read, Nikos Kazantzakis's The Last Temptation Of Christ, the effervescent tune suggested that even Souther – "a bandit and a heartbreaker," went the lyric – might be saved. "That wretched bastard was not beyond redemption," Sill would tell the audience at a show. "It was writing this song or suicide."

As it stung, it stunned. "I'm not recommending rough endings – they're no fun, and they last a long time," says Souther, ruefully. "But she turned it into something amazing."

Geffen had been sitting on Sill's album, searching for the single. Cross Maker, he thought, was it. He dispatched a solo piano ➢

One from the heart: (clockwise from top left) The Association's Russ Giguere; Sill's flower painting from the mid-'70s; with poet/partner David Bearden; Judee and her self-inked treble clef tattoo, 1971; playing in front of debut LP designer Gary Burden, February 1971; (below) 2005's posthumous *Dreams Come True* and Peltier's 2005 LP featuring Sill.

< demo to Graham Nash, asking for help. They cut it in four hours. "Judee was totally on top of what she wanted," remembers Nash. "She had the arrangement completely in her head, and I just helped bring that into reality."

The brilliant single, the Hollywood billboard, the Asylum buzz: *Judee Sill* should have flown. But more than six months after release, it had barely sold 40,000 copies.

Sill bristled at the promotional push. Asylum, Peltier says, had advanced her $100,000, and Geffen wanted to recoup quickly, to not lose big on his first bet. She opened not for folk-minded peers but for raucous acts like Edgar Winter, Jeff Beck, and Country Joe McDonald – anything for an audience. Even when she toured with Nash and David Crosby, she wrangled restless crowds. "She has to learn to play with hecklers and not intimidate them," chided one critic.

Though she often lamented her slow songwriting pace, Sill returned to the studio, leading a massive band that included Spooner Oldham, Buddy Emmons and Chris Ethridge. She often conducted the orchestra herself.

The resultant second album, *Heart Food*, was enormous and majestic, layers of gliding strings and declaiming background vocals augmenting one of the richest singer-songwriter albums ever. Sill's counterpoint was instinctive, her choral arrangements audacious. It was a splurge, the last testament of a musician using resources before they vanished. It tanked.

"Geffen was doing everything he could," says Peltier. "He gave her everything, a chance when I don't think anyone else would have. She got her break, but she just wasn't selling any records."

Courtesy Tommy Peltier, Henry Diltz (3), Getty

> "I knew that I had to clean myself up or stay in jail for the rest of my life."
> **JUDEE SILL**

Judee Sill · Dreams Come True
tommy peltier chariot of astral light
judee sill

THE SIX YEARS BETWEEN *HEART Food*'s March 1973 release and Sill's November 1979 death are a haze of conjecture and failure, love triangles and pointed fingers. Friends take aim at an array of people and problems that broke Sill's career and, eventually, her.

In 1972, as *Heart Food* took shape, Sill began a deeply co-dependent relationship with David Bearden, a married poet. They wrote and recorded together, even naming Sill's LP for a soul-food restaurant they frequented. Sill took Bearden to Peltier's place on Saturdays for day-long jams, everyone playing as beans simmered. "Nobody liked Bearden, but I put up with him because she asked," says Peltier. "She was the best sideman."

Sill and Bearden toured Europe as a pair in early 1973 in advance of *Heart Food*'s release, the trip where she transfixed with The Kiss on The Old Grey Whistle Test. "Tonight he made my cells explode with love," Sill wrote in their joint diary. Back home, the relationship curdled, with Sill cheating and Bearden starting drunken brawls, breaking his leg twice. "Let me be worthy of David's love," Sill wrote. "Please let us grow from this purging."

Such desperation defined the decade's second half. During a European radio show, she allegedly lampooned Geffen with a homophobic slur, catalysing her Asylum dismissal. (Geffen denies it. Jackson Browne dismisses it. Peltier, sighing, says it sounds right.) She survived on quarterly checks of about $3,000 from a Texas oil inheritance.

What's more, a string of car crashes and botched back surgeries that required her to spend time in a cast made her crave painkillers, which she scored illicitly after doctors refused them. She fell down a set of wet stairs at Santa Barbara's Del Mar Motel. Giguere maintains that Bearden, drunk, pushed her. Astra Beck, Bearden's stepdaughter, says he denied it, though their relationship did involve physical conflict. (In 1977, Sill sued the hotel for negligence and won insurance money.)

"She was in a lot of pain and had to get back on drugs," Peltier remembers. "Then she got off of drugs, going to methadone clinics and everything. She had such strong willpower."

In 1974, that willpower stunned even Peltier. As she struggled with injuries and low sales, she corralled her jazz pals to cut some songs with eccentric pop wunderkind Emitt Rhodes at his home studio. Bassist Bill Plummer hoisted Sill onto the piano bench. "Once she started playing, she came alive, miraculous," remembers Peltier. "It was all of us, all of her friends backing her up."

They sent the tapes, dubbed *Dreams Come True*, to Asylum, which Geffen had sold, and Arista, which Clive Davis had started. "A commercial edge seems to be missing," Davis replied. Sill wrote a song for the wedding of her only niece, Donna Disparti, and occasionally performed. Her recording career was finished.

In the late '70s, Sill began another doomed romance, with Lal Baum, a descendant of The Wizard Of Oz author L. Frank Baum and a struggling actor. The relationship was ruinous, remembers Baum's daughter, Heidi Bates Hogan – two addicts with foiled artistic ambitions who would sometimes write songs but mostly got high. (Bill Callahan covered their sombre but ascendant For A Rainbow, in 2009.) He demanded she lose weight, then spurned her affections. When they broke up, Sill called so often Baum left the phone off the hook. "We'd been through it all and could talk about anything," remembers Peltier. "She'd call and tell me about this guy, how she was down."

There were bright spots. That summer, for instance, Sill and Peltier had gone to see Giguere with The Association, a trip down a now-distant memory lane. But in early November 1979, Sill's roommate, Judy Taylor, called Peltier to say she was shooting up alone and had almost overdosed. Later, Sill and Peltier met for a date cruising beachside singles bars, competing to see who could get the most phone numbers. "I had one," Peltier says, "and she had half a dozen – bees to honey, this magnetism."

Giguere even shared Thanksgiving dinner with Sill. He didn't sense his old friend was depressed. She was excited, after all, to have a new bag of grass. A day later, she was dead.

"I always liked Judee – she was kind. My father was an asshole," says Hogan. "When I heard she died, I thought, It's probably over my dad. He's not worth it."

THERE WERE NO OBITUARies, neither in the Los Angeles press nor the nationals. There was, at least, a memorial service for several dozen people at the Lake Shrine of the religious sect Self-Realization Fellowship. (According to Disparti, Sill – an enthusiast for spiritual systems at large – became deeply interested in Buddhism shortly before her death.)

The setting was halcyon, the scene tense. Some friends glared at Hogan, 13, thinking she was her dad's new girlfriend. Giguere remembers the mourners splitting into cliques, one side blaming the other. When the service was over, he pulled Disparti – the sole executor of Sill's estate – aside. "He told me she was a genius," remembers Disparti, "and to not let the music die."

After the service, Disparti trekked to Sill's apartment to pack her meagre belongings. She put a box of writings, drawings, and photos inside her aunt's ragged yellow Oldsmobile, its interior heavily pocked with cigarette burns, and drove home. The box went missing for decades, shuttled among family members. When Andy Brown and Brian Lindstrom began making their film almost a decade ago, they found it, the only substantive archive of her life after *Heart Food*. It was their skeleton key. "We realised," Brown says, "Judee would be able to tell her own story."

In that trove, Brown and Lindstrom uncovered several unrealised songs and implored young musicians they interviewed to take a look. A poem written a month before Sill's death and called To Lal And Heidi – that is, Baum and Hogan – struck Big Thief guitarist Buck Meek. "There was pain there, this sense of unconditional love," says Meek. "But the lyrics felt so transcendent."

Meek shaped them into The Rainbow, which he intends to release later this year. "If we believe what we've seen, could a lullaby rise?" he sings, sweetly. "Could hope through the sky stream?" The process epitomises Sill's trip – a song salvaged from her nadir, given a second chance to work Pythagorean magic. The music had not died.

Sill's current resurrection is not the first to be attempted. Following a series of reissues from 2003 on, Jim O'Rourke mixed her last recordings for free at his kitchen table, prompting 2005's *Dreams Come True*. "When I soloed up her vocal track, I had to get away from the mixing desk," remembers O'Rourke. "I don't think I've ever had that reaction. It was overwhelming."

The puzzle of Sill's life, though, is more complete now. She's no longer just a passing mention in Geffen's biography or another rock casualty who released collector's items before disappearing. She's becoming, instead, a full person who transmuted real trouble into singular songs. "That's food for me," she once said. "That's high octane."

Peltier still lives in the same apartment where Sill jammed. It is something of a reliquary. The flowers she painted on his door decades ago remain, the white paint around them a dull yellow. He recently invited some pals from those Saturday sessions over for his 88th birthday; they talked about their old friend, the bassist for so many stoned afternoons.

"We loved each other, and I'm the witness," says Peltier. "She was real, and people are finally putting her on a pedestal. She would really love this."

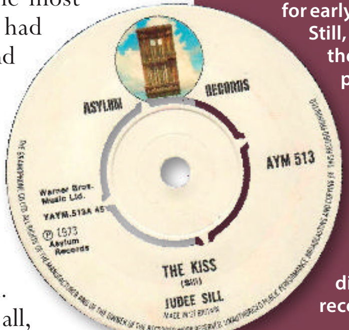
SILL: In Love With You

"May you savour each word like a raspberry," the linernotes of 1971's *Judee Sill* concluded. Here are five songs to get you started.

The Kiss

(from Heart Food, Asylum, 1973/Live In London: The BBC Recordings, 1972–1973, Troubadour, 2015)

Sill was flummoxed this was a single, rightly worried its pizzicato waltz and French horns were too extravagant for early-'70s dials. Still, this song about the hopeful power of connection in a challenging universe is spellbinding – whether in lush *Heart Food* form or on the BBC disc's solo piano recording.



The Phoenix

(from Heart Food, Asylum, 1973)

"I never saw him losin' a race," Sill sings of the Devil in the second verse, "but I think he must." Her entire life and tragic end live inside this line, the crux of a twilit ditty with a guitar line so supple it always comforts. She briefly staved off her demons, then slowly yielded to them.

Lady-O

(from Judee Sill, Asylum, 1971)

Male critics often painted Sill as haughty and homely, an unlikely bisexual fit for the female singer-songwriter archetype that, Graham Nash notes, Joni Mitchell defined. But Lady-O – a love song of sapphic surrender – says fuck 'em, albeit tenderly, accepting joy and titillation wherever your "just heart rolled and flowed."

Lopin' Along Thru The Cosmos

(from Judee Sill, Asylum, 1971)

The greatest self-help song ever? Sill's anthem of self-acceptance summarises familiar travails, especially the tendency to covet results rather than revelling in the road toward them. "I'll tell you a secret I've never revealed," she offers twice. "However we are is OK." Both times, it feels like a long, warm hug.

The Last Resort

(Dreams Come True, Water, 2005)

Sill didn't only write slow songs. Bent by music industry woes and nearly broken by car crashes, she gathered her friends for her last stand, epitomised by this Pentecostal romp about deliverance, friendship, and how following intuition can offer "great revelation."

Where next?

Aside from Sill's three primary LPs and a slew of posthumous compilations, check Tommy Peltier's *Chariot Of Astral Light* (Black Beauty, 2005) and its Pocket-Socket, their collaboration about their first night together. Sill sounds splendid providing harmonies for David Bearden on Bee Gees, Gene Clark, and gospel tunes at davidbearden.com. And on 2009 tribute LP *Crayon Angel*, Beth Orton perfectly embodies Sill's struggle for redemption on Reach For The Sky, while Grizzly Bear's Daniel Rossen adds apt cascades of harmony to Waterfall, one of Sill's most guileless love songs.

Grayson Haver Currin

MOJO EYEWITNESS

THE CHAMBERS BROTHERS' TIME HAS COME TODAY

Family harmonisers from the Deep South, they sang for Superman, played with Lightnin' Hopkins and met electric Dylan at Newport. Mixing the blues, folk and rock'n'roll, the racially mixed group duly achieved nirvana with 1968's Number 11 US hit Time Has Come Today, an 11-minute acid-soul call-to-arms which declared "my soul has been psychedelicised." Then, the hippy dream faded and the Mob moved in. "We were putting everything into it," the band and their intimates tell MOJO. "We knew it would be remembered for ever."

Interviews by **LOIS WILSON**

Lester Chambers: We grew up picking cotton in Echo Hills, Mississippi. [In 1949] I was expected to do a man's work at nine years old. Music was the only joy. We sung in the fields, that was where me and my brothers George, Joe and Willie practised our four-part harmonies and then when we got home, we sung around the fireplace. That was our life.

Willie Chambers: Home was a makeshift house, there was no electricity, a leaking roof when it rained. But we had a battery radio and listened to the Grand Ole Opry on a Sunday. Country and gospel were our influences. We sang in the Mt Calvary Baptist Church then George got drafted, and on his return he went to LA. The whole family followed in 1954 – we snuck out in the middle of the night and joined George and became The Chambers Brothers.

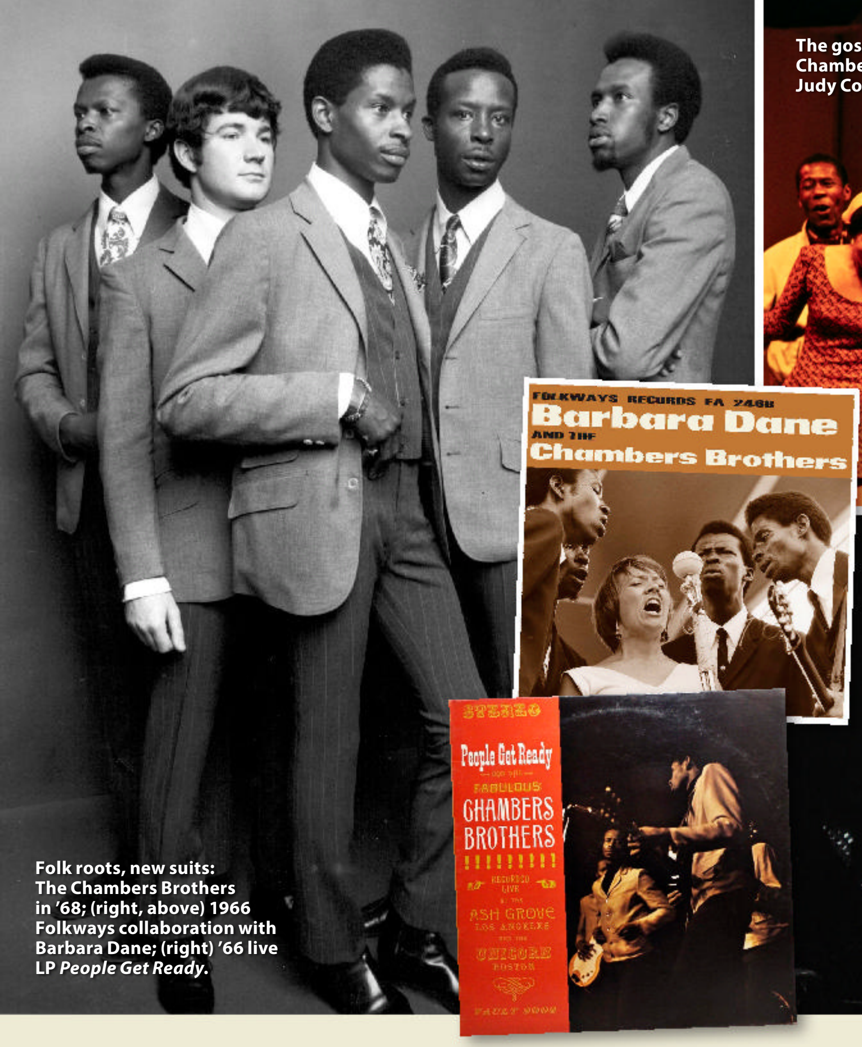
LC: We were singing in churches and then the first paid gig we did in Los Angeles was at the Hollywood Palladium, a press party for [Superman actor] George Reeves. Another one of our brothers, Douglas, got us it. He was a waiter there, he heard they were looking for singers and told them about us. We sung You Saw Me Crying In The Chapel. We got paid half a grapefruit, a strip of bacon and a slice of toast each.

WC: Then we started singing at the Ash Grove on Melrose. That's where we started to take off. It came about because I was also playing guitar with [Texas blues singer] Long Gone Miles. He was in Lightnin' Hopkins' band, and Lightnin' Hopkins was playing the Ash Grove. Joe was a hairdresser and when Lightnin' got Joe to straighten his hair we got talking to the owner Ed Pearl and told him about ➢

Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

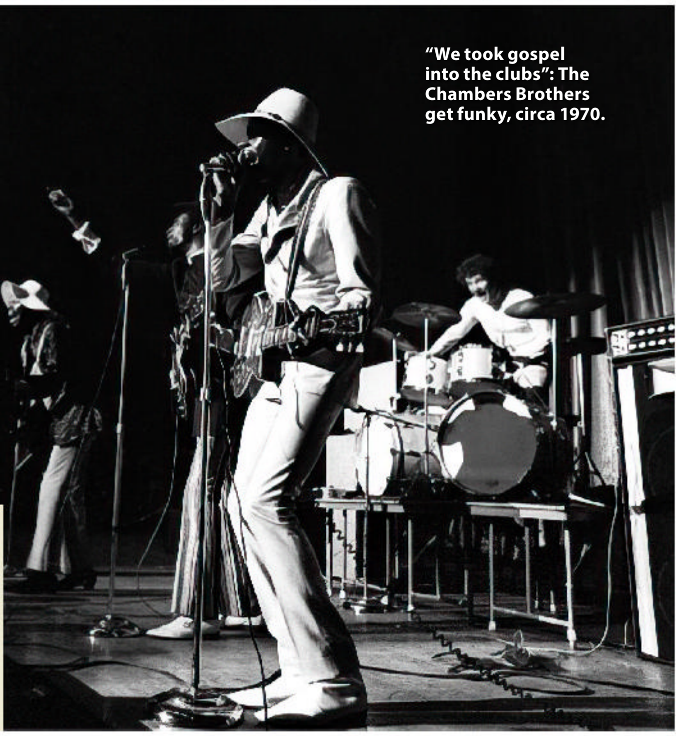
Band of Brothers: (clockwise from left) Lester Chambers, Brian Keenan, George Chambers, Willie Chambers, Joe Chambers, circa 1969.

COLUMBIA
45 RPM
THE CHAMBERS BROTHERS
4-44414
ZSP 13599
3:05
TIME HAS COME TODAY
-J. Chambers - W. Chambers-
Produced by David Rubinson
© COLUMBIA MARCAS REG. PRINTED IN U.S.A.



Folk roots, new suits: The Chambers Brothers in '68; (right, above) 1966 Folkways collaboration with Barbara Dane; (right) '66 live LP *People Get Ready*.

The gospel-soul-psychedelia according to…: Chambers Brothers with Joan Baez (left) and Judy Collins at the 1967 Newport jazz festival.



"We took gospel into the clubs": The Chambers Brothers get funky, circa 1970.

"THEY WERE THE FIRST BLACK ROCK BAND... EVERYONE WANTED TO BOOK THEM."

Barbara Dane

our group, and he gave us a chance. This must have been early 1960s.

Barbara Dane: The Ash Grove was a coffeehouse with a small stage and about 100 people in the audience and it was folk and blues, and we shared a bill: me, The Chambers Brothers and Lightnin' Hopkins, and they were singing a cappella gospel and they rocked the place.

LC: After three weeks of trying out we got a residency, and we were so wild they had to replace the glasses with plastic cups because people were dancing so much they were bumping into the tables.

WC: Mahalia Jackson didn't like it. She thought it was blasphemous, that gospel should only be sung in church, and that caused a problem. Clubs wouldn't book us unless we mixed it up, do a bit of blues and folk and rock'n'roll, and that's how we ended up with our rock sound. Then Barbara Dane said, "I think if the world could see you guys, you could make it!"

BD: [In 1964] I asked them if they wanted to go on tour with me and record with me. We did [1966's *Barbara Dane And The Chambers Brothers*] for Moe Asch's Folkways. We did songs from the freedom movement: We'll Never Turn Back, Freedom Is A Constant Struggle, Go Tell It On The Mountain. The cover was a picture of me, a white woman, singing with them, four black men. It was a statement.

LC: Barbara Dane knew Pete Seeger and that's how we got to play Newport Festival for the first time in '64. We did gospel workshops, then in '65 we stood in for Josh White who was sick. We headlined in front of 54,000 people. We did Jimmy Reed with gospel harmonies and electric guitar. Bob Dylan saw us.

WC: It was kind of through Dylan being on Columbia and us playing Newport Festival that John Hammond Snr signed us to Columbia, but that came later.

BD: They were out of their heads with excitement at playing Newport. Because they were the first black rock band, and at Newport they were incredible, and after that everyone wanted to book them.

Jesse Cahn: I started playing drums with them shortly after Newport. On-stage they wore sharkskin suits, Stacy Adams shoes, Joe had a four-inch-high pompadour. We were playing six nights a week, R&B and soul covers, and putting everything into it. I weighed myself before and after a show at the Downtown, and I had lost five pounds in water weight. It was that intense. We did [1966 debut] *People Get Ready* which was a live LP, half from Ash Grove, half from the Unicorn.

Elvin Bishop: Paul Butterfield Blues Band played with them at Martha's Vineyard. They did this great version of People Get Ready – they were one of the first to bring gospel and rock'n'roll and folk and blues together, but they could also communicate across racial lines. And they were nice! Lester was the most outgoing member, Willie was a bit shy. I remember we all got our instruments out and sat on the porch of the boarding house where we were staying and jammed. There was a connection.

WC: When John Hammond Snr signed us we had Brian Keenan on drums. He had played with Manfred Mann and was in The Losers, the Ondine label's house band, when we first saw him playing. To this day I can't understand why Mr Hammond brought us to Columbia. They didn't record our kind of music. The closest artist to rock'n'roll they had at the time was Paul Revere & The Raiders, and they weren't anything like us.

LC: We scared Columbia. We were already doing Time Has Come Today in our set and Clive Davis told us right from the beginning that we would never record it. But we knew different. I think they saw us as a vocal group like the Motown acts, they didn't want us playing our own instruments.

WC: Time Has Come Today was our contribution to psychedelic music. Joe had been to see Timothy Leary at UCLA and that had inspired his lyrics, and I wrote the riff on acoustic guitar. It started out as a two-minute song and then we kept extending it and extending it until it got to 11 minutes.

LC: We were hippies, we lived the hippy life and everywhere we went on our travels there would be groups of kids stood at crossroads hitchhiking their way to San Francisco to join the hippy community, and it was just beautiful. There was no hating, it really felt like the time had come.

WC: We used the bumper guard from an old Plymouth car that we found in an alley to make the original clock sound on the record because we didn't have a cowbell, and then it was like

Getty (9), Courtesy Jesse Cahn

CHAMBERS BROTHERS
The Chambers Brothers
The Time Has Come

Chambers music: performing at 'Black Woodstock' Harlem Cultural Festival, Mount Morris Park, New York, June 29, 1969; (inset) 1967 debut LP *The Time Has Come.*

Good times: Chambers Brothers posing with (second left) Grace Jones and friends, New York, 1972; (left) "We were one of the first racially integrated groups": the band have a group hug in 1968.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Lester Chambers** (lead vocals)

- **Willie Chambers** (vocals and guitar)

- **Jesse Cahn** (drummer/roadie)

- **Tony Smith** (roadie)

- **Barbara Dane** (jazz and folk singer)

- **Elvin Bishop** (Butterfield Blues Band guitarist and singer)

"Lester! Scream" and "Joe! Laugh". Our producer, David Rubinson, he was a fan, he said he was going to record the song even if Clive Davis said no and he got fired. So he got us to come in an hour early before our session and we did it in one take, and David Rubinson *did* get fired for doing it.

LC: We had to do it real quick, we put it down live in one take. That always surprises people when we tell them we did that. That first Columbia record [1967's *The Time Has Come*], with 11 minutes of Time Has Come Today on it, and All Strung Out Over You and People Get Ready and I Can't Stand It and Romeo And Juliet, it got to Number 6 and became a gold record. Time… got to Number 11 [in September 1968]!

EB: I remember hearing Time Has Come Today and it was a showstopper, a performance piece.

WC: Everything changed after we had the hit. We celebrated, boy we celebrated, we knew what we had done, we knew Time… would be remembered for ever. We were proud.

Tony Smith: I started working with them a year after Time… hit and there were rock star parties around the swimming pool at their house in Connecticut. Some people would get naked, but it never got out of hand, they were nice church boys still, so it never got crazy. They were playing stadiums and festivals to 200 to 300,000 people but it didn't matter how big a crowd, when they sang it was a high spiritual experience, it was like rapture, everyone was taken some place else. At Boston Commons the whole crowd came on stage and a tree got uprooted.

JC: As time went on, the hippy scene changed. It went from this sense of community, how we were going to change the world, and psychedelics and pot, to hard drugs. The management changed and these Mafia guys were hanging around, it was pretty scary. I was roadie-ing for them and I remember at the Circus in New York climbing over passed-out bodies on the dancefloor. No one was dancing to them any more, and one time in Long Island, a young Mafia guy was waiting outside with blackjacks for me because I hadn't let him in the dressing room while they got changed after a show. I got out soon after.

TS: They went to Philadelphia to work with Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. I was in Sigma Sound Studio and it just didn't feel like the sessions had been put together properly. It felt like it could have begun a new era for them, but it hadn't been well thought out.

WC: Columbia sent us to Philadelphia in 1972 and we are still trying to figure out what that was about. (*Sings The O'Jays' Back Stabbers*) "They smilin' in your face…" That was crazy. [The album they recorded, titled *Oh, My God!*, was shelved until 2022.]

TS: Bad management and finance problems caused friction towards the end. There was a bad vibe. In the dressing room they would have scary arguments, they would be screaming at one another, it got volatile, but then they'd go on stage and put on a show as if nothing had happened.

LC: We were playing the Beacon at New York and the call from Columbia came through that they were pulling the tour. We split [they then reunited to record two albums for Avco, 1974's *Unbonded* and 1975's *Right Move*]. I didn't see any royalty cheques until 1994. I ended up homeless. Sweet Relief, a music charity, took donations for me.

WC: It was like, where did we come from? Where did we go? We got no help from the industry, but despite all that we changed the world: we came from the cotton fields, we were one of the first racially integrated groups, we took gospel into the clubs, we got 11-minute psychedelia songs played on AM radio and into the chart. That's our legacy.

LC: There was Arthur Lee and Love and Jimi Hendrix and Sly And The Family Stone, but we did it first. Ⓜ

Time Has Come Today: Revelations Of A Mississippi Hippie by Lester Chambers with Thurman Watts is out now.

“The *way* you move people is more important than the number of people you move”: Jason Isbell, Nashville, January, 2023.

JASON ISBELL's
new album combines fears for America with lessons learned from sobriety and Scorsese. Its songs about abortion and activism, bad love and loneliness, have driven him to painful places – but, as he tells GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN, that's where the real stories are: "What's the point of all this if you're not terrified?"
Photograph by DANNY CLINCH

MOMENTS OF TRUTH

JASON ISBELL's SEVEN-YEAR-OLD daughter, Mercy Rose, was unpacking a new toy when she finally offered up her review of her father's charged and tumultuous new album, *Weathervanes*. "Daddy," she reported in their home 30 minutes south of Nashville, "this record sounds *sadder* than your other records."

The pair had just returned from a short dinner-and-shopping run, cruising to town in the 2019 BMW M5 Isbell bought because, as he laughs, "it's the fastest car you can get with a CD player." Whenever they make such a trip, Mercy Rose knows to ask to hear his new music. Isbell peppered her for track-by-track feedback, but she demurred, requesting silence to ponder country-soul shuffles about self-pity and slicing Southern rock about overdoses. But back home she finally offered the take Isbell recognised as mostly right.

"I told her we sometimes make really sad music to make ourselves feel better, that it's a lot of what music has represented," Isbell, 44, tells MOJO the next day. "I don't know that she's able to parse sadness from desperation, but she may be right: these are particularly difficult times for people who have been able to ignore America's problems, and, for better or worse, I was one."

The songs on *Weathervanes* – Isbell's first self-produced album in a dozen years and, not coincidentally, since getting sober – square up to fraught topics with his strong jaw and formidably versatile backing band, The 400 Unit. Racism poisons the domestic scenes of Cast Iron Skillet, while an uncaring health care system rips apart a family during King Of Oklahoma. There are abortions, school shootings, and nervous breakdowns, issues that commingle to shape Isbell's most urgent dispatch yet. In America in 2023, Isbell suggests, how else could it be?

"We are all more desperate than we were. There are a lot of things that are infinitely frustrating about American life right now," he says, his tired eyes speaking to a hectic week where he joined a Nashville benefit for LGBTQ rights then flew to Los Angeles for the premiere of Running With Our Eyes Closed, a candid HBO documentary about his 2020 album, *Reunions*.

"There's so much happening that we can't do anything other than try to process it," he continues. "Everything you do to try to alleviate that frustration only serves the purpose of allowing you to exhaust yourself and go to sleep."

Given the long odds of real solutions amid bureaucratic quagmires, what chance does a songwriter have to make a difference?

"You do what you can and count your ➢

Danny Clinch

Southern discomfort: (clockwise from top left) Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, 2023; Isbell with his two Grammys, 2018; on-stage with (right) Drive-By Truckers' Patterson Hood, 2003; performing at a Justin Townes Earle celebration, Nashville, 2023; forthcoming new LP *Weathervanes*; on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon with Amanda Shires, February 14, 2023; (below) 2013 breakthrough album *Southeastern*.

◀ blessings," Isbell says, rubbing his eyes, a vape tucked against his palm. "You get some rest and start over."

ISBELL IS A NEW AMERICANA star straight from central casting, his redemptive narrative a hero's tale of the prodigal son.

Born and raised near the fertile musical crescent of Alabama's Muscle Shoals, Isbell was a brainy kid who escaped the flashpoints of parents who married young through marching band and roaring guitar. In his early twenties, the college drop-out enlisted in the Drive-By Truckers; the precocious kid with chipmunk cheeks briefly turned the ascendant Southern favourites into a three-guitar, three-songwriter chimera, one of rock's most electrifying bands.

But life became an unhinged bender, during which he married and divorced his bandmate, bassist Shonna Tucker. For their sake and, ultimately, his, the Truckers let him go. He made a trio of uneven solo albums and partied to a dangerous degree.

"We were on this bobsled to hell, this alpine slide into the bottom," says 400 Unit bassist Jimbo Hart, who has known Isbell since they played in rival Shoals marching bands. "When you're drinking on-stage – and we were drinking *everywhere* – and the guy hands you a bottle, you have to hit it. It was too much."

But in 2012, Isbell entered rehab through the encouragement of Amanda Shires, the fiddler and songwriter who was his bandmate then and is his wife and lyrical confidant now. Soon after trying sobriety, he wrote and recorded his breakthrough solo album, 2013's *Southeastern*. In the decade since, Isbell's eyes have brightened and his face narrowed, a dusty brown goatee underlining the burgeoning sharpness of his features. "Why would recovery have much to do with making an album?" he asks. "If you're in recovery, 'my life' and 'my sobriety' are pretty much interchangeable."

Isbell has since become Americana's progressive white male paragon, its witty ombudsman on Twitter, and a plain-spoken lyricist unafraid to alienate his sometimes-conservative constituency in songs.

He's rarely been as unabashed as on *Weathervanes*. Late in the LP, the tender White Beretta unfolds above weeping steel guitar and drums with just enough life left to trot. He narrates a road trip to Memphis for an abortion – a true story from his youth and a mission made more complicated by his region's hardline Christianity. It overflows with regret not for what happened but how little he could comfort his partner, whose choice gave them freedom for the future. "That was my first real difficult time in life," he says. "That's all very personal stuff, and I love that song for it."

When he was recording *Weathervanes*, the song's other half reached out for the first time in years. "I'm not mystical," he admits, "but I knew then it was OK to do it, that this song was going to be fine."

Isbell also knows that, when he's putting enough of himself into a tune, he's bound to feel uneasy. When he first cut Save The World, a song about how concern and activism can deplete you, he realised the lyrics were too vague, too far from his own experience. He rewrote it, booked extra time in the studio, and sang it again the day he flew to Austin to help induct Sheryl Crow into the Austin City Limits Hall of Fame.

"I don't have this high concept. My

"THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT WORKS"

JASON ISBELL looks back over 10 years of breakthrough album, *Southeastern*.

SOON AFTER Isbell joined the Drive-By Truckers, their opus of backwoods noir, *Southern Rock Opera*, became one of 2001's most acclaimed albums. David Fricke lauded its "narrative electricity" and "whoop-ass arena-rock fantasies" in a four-star Rolling Stone rave, catalysing its buzz. "We'd been on the road playing for next to nobody," Isbell remembers. "And then all of a sudden, we look up, and it's like, Where the fuck did all these people come from? But it wasn't really mine, because I hadn't played on that record."

And then, in the summer of 2013, he saw it happen again, this time for his own songs. His *Southeastern* LP had been out only days when his band pulled into Off Broadway, a 350-capacity club blocks from the Mississippi in St Louis. Two weeks earlier, The New York Times Magazine had called *Southeastern* – Isbell's first album since becoming sober, containing his most vulnerable and nuanced songs to date – "one of the best stories American music has to tell in 2013."

The show was sold out, but a ticketless throng still milled about the parking lot, hopeful for a miracle or at least to listen from the asphalt. "Everybody else in the band was like, 'What the fuck?'" remembers Isbell, laughing. "I said, No, no, I've seen this before. This is what happens when it works.'"

As Hemingway put it, "Gradually, then suddenly": *Southeastern* lifted the curtain on Isbell's popularity, its confessionals epitomising a new sort of sensitive man from the American Southeast. The magazine covers, theatres and amphitheatres, Grammys and movie roles that followed: they glinted in Isbell's near future for the first time in a St Louis parking lot. *GHC*

JASON ISBELL
SOUTHEASTERN

Danny Clinch, Getty (4)

concept is honesty," he says. "It's not an easy job, but it's not supposed to be easy if you do it right. What's the point of all this if you're not terrified?"

> **"I DON'T HAVE THIS HIGH CONCEPT. MY CONCEPT IS HONESTY. IT'S NOT AN EASY JOB, BUT IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE."**
>
> **JASON ISBELL**

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, however, Isbell was a bit too unnerved to produce his own records. The quest to maintain sobriety meant ceding control – "or at least the myth of control," as he puts it – over some facets of his life. Nashville staple Dave Cobb (Chris Stapleton; Brandi Carlile) produced *Southeastern* and the triptych that followed.

But Isbell finally felt he'd grown enough to resume that role, to wield a band that, with strenuous touring, had been forged into "one instrument". They tracked almost all of *Weathervanes* in 10 days, Isbell playing the songs for The 400 Unit for the first time in the studio, the players responding in real time. The key was leaving the results alone, in trusting his band's visceral response. Several cuts are second takes. That was another lesson of sobriety.

"So much of the process is: When do you stop? When do you decide this is the right take, the right approach, the right person, the right gear?" says Isbell. "That enables the right amount of 'creative', without going down the rabbit hole. I'd come to a point where I knew when to stop in general."

Isbell's confidence stemmed, in part, from a surprise collaborator: Martin Scorsese. During lockdown, the singer, itching to remain in motion, told his agent he'd like to try acting, though he'd done little since elementary school. He auditioned for a few cameos – including one in Scorsese's upcoming Killers Of The Flower Moon, a tale of oil-money murders in Oklahoma starring Robert De Niro and Leonardo DiCaprio that also features Jack White and Sturgill Simpson. As he prepared, Isbell studied the history undergirding the story, even scouring public records. He read for a larger role and aced it.

On set one night, Isbell offered a suggestion. To his surprise, "Marty", as he now calls him, indulged the idea. Could he helm a record with his longtime band with the same kind of inclusive authority?

"I saw it was possible to have a vision and execute that vision while also collaborating without compromise," says Isbell, his eyes a little wider as he replays the epiphany. "He had confidence we were going to make a good movie, so yeah, let's play around. Collaboration doesn't threaten him."

To wit, *Weathervanes* opens with Death Wish, one of Isbell's most musically audacious and involved tracks. The anxious tale of a relationship that flirts with mutually assured destruction, it is as stormy and electrifying as its subject, dramatic strings licking across a seductive riff and twitchy drums.

Isbell made it the first single because it brimmed with crossover potential, potentially able to reach beyond his Americana legion. He knows enough now, he says, to handle a hit, even the irritation he realises real fame would bring to his day-to-day life.

"Early on, I figured out the *way* you move people is more important than the number of people you move," Isbell says. "But it's fun to reach all these folks who grew up in much different places than me. It makes me feel I have more in common with way more people than I thought." Ⓜ

the world tur
upside do

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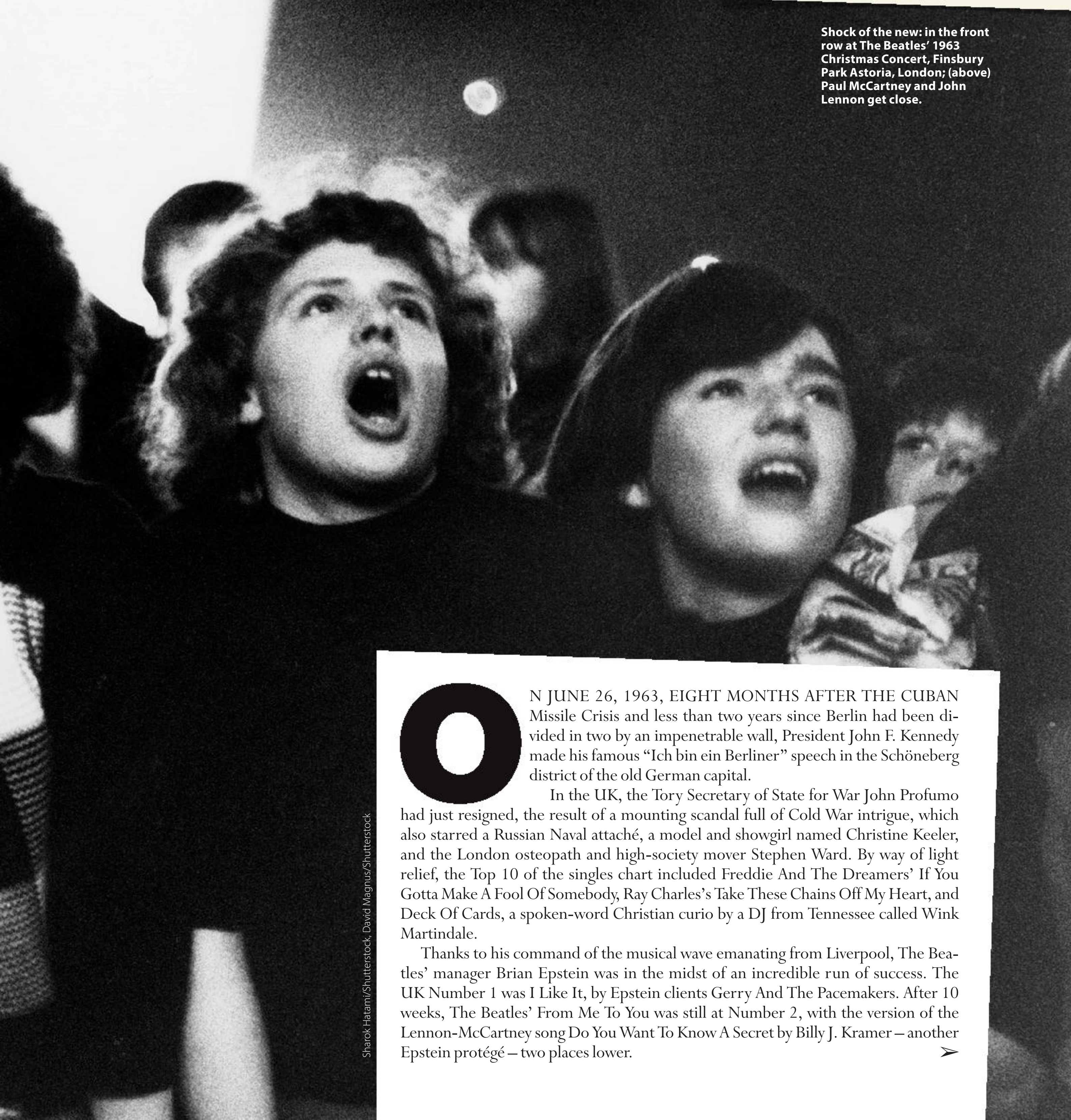
In 1963, **The Beatles** burst forth, a force that remade pop, and Britain, in an instant. Sixty years on, their subversive spirit shines through the maelstrom of incandescent fans, outraged MPs and hyperbolic media. And their records weren't bad, either. **John Harris** flips his (Beatle) wig all over again.



Shock of the new: in the front row at The Beatles' 1963 Christmas Concert, Finsbury Park Astoria, London; (above) Paul McCartney and John Lennon get close.

Sharok Hatami/Shutterstock, David Magnus/Shutterstock

ON JUNE 26, 1963, EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE CUBAN Missile Crisis and less than two years since Berlin had been divided in two by an impenetrable wall, President John F. Kennedy made his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in the Schöneberg district of the old German capital.

In the UK, the Tory Secretary of State for War John Profumo had just resigned, the result of a mounting scandal full of Cold War intrigue, which also starred a Russian Naval attaché, a model and showgirl named Christine Keeler, and the London osteopath and high-society mover Stephen Ward. By way of light relief, the Top 10 of the singles chart included Freddie And The Dreamers' If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody, Ray Charles's Take These Chains Off My Heart, and Deck Of Cards, a spoken-word Christian curio by a DJ from Tennessee called Wink Martindale.

Thanks to his command of the musical wave emanating from Liverpool, The Beatles' manager Brian Epstein was in the midst of an incredible run of success. The UK Number 1 was I Like It, by Epstein clients Gerry And The Pacemakers. After 10 weeks, The Beatles' From Me To You was still at Number 2, with the version of the Lennon-McCartney song Do You Want To Know A Secret by Billy J. Kramer – another Epstein protégé – two places lower.

➢

R 6055
THE BEATLES
SHE LOVES YOU / I'LL GET YOU

That day, The Beatles were in Newcastle, where they were about to perform at the Majestic Ballroom. Which hotel The Beatles stayed in has long been a matter of local controversy: some accounts pinpoint the city-centre Turks Head; others suggest it was the Imperial, in the suburb of Jesmond. It doesn't much matter: the significance of that day was all about what happened some time after lunch, when John Lennon and Paul McCartney began writing the song that would set them on a completely new trajectory, freeing them from the clichés of 'Merseybeat', and propelling them somewhere completely unique.

McCartney would later remember "sitting on the bed in this hotel somewhere with John in the afternoon daylight." According to Lennon, their starting point "was Paul's idea: instead of singing 'I love you' again, we'd have a third party." Indirect inspiration, said McCartney, came from Forget Him, a hit at the time for the Philadelphia-born singer Bobby Rydell. Their thoughts may also have been influenced by The Everly Brothers' version of the 1930s song Temptation – a Number 1 British hit two years before – and its refrain of "yay, yay, yay, yah."

What they came up with, bolstered by a falsetto "Woo!" copied over from Twist And Shout, was titled She Loves You. Lennon seems to have been responsible for the bittersweet verses ("You think you've lost your love…"), while McCartney's more upbeat instincts defined the bridge and chorus. They completed it soon after at Paul's family home on Forthlin Road, in Liverpool – where his father Jim queried the song's "yeah, yeah, yeah" refrain: "That's very nice, son, but there's enough of these Americanisms around. Couldn't you sing 'She loves you, yes, yes, yes?'"

The suggestion was politely rejected. On the face of it, the new song stuck with a winning formula: after Love Me Do, Please Please Me and From Me To You, more fun with romantic lyrics and personal pronouns. But it was actually a radical departure. As The Beatles' lives moved at an ever-faster speed, She Loves You sounded like the essence of what was happening to them, full of a sudden sense of exhilaration and excitement. It was the perfect song to soundtrack the second half of 1963, and the arrival of what became known as Beatlemania: a 140-second prophecy that was coming true even as it was written.

THE FOLLOWING MONDAY, THEY WERE IN STUDIO 2 at Abbey Road, recording She Loves You under the supervision of George Martin. "I thought it was great," the producer later recalled, "but I was intrigued by the final chord, an odd sort of major sixth, with George [Harrison] doing the sixth and John and Paul the third and fifths, like a Glenn Miller arrangement. They were saying, 'It's a great chord! Nobody's heard it before!' Of course I knew that wasn't quite true."

The session's chief engineer was Norman Smith, who would work with The Beatles through to *Rubber Soul*, and then go on to produce three Pink Floyd albums. "I was setting up the microphones when I saw the lyrics on the music stand," he would later recall. "I thought, I'll just have a quick look. 'She loves you, yeah yeah yeah/She loves you, yeah yeah yeah/She loves you, yeah yeah yeah yeah.' I thought, Oh my God, what a lyric: this is going to be one I don't like."

When The Beatles actually played the new song, his feelings were so transformed that he was soon "up at the mixer, jogging around" in delight. Smith quickly decided to boost the bass and drums, partly by suspending a microphone over Ringo Starr's kit. The result was a newly-powerful sound, perfectly suited to the song's mood. There was no intro: the merest of drum rolls, and it crashed straight into the chorus, refusing to let up until that final, unexpected ending. In retrospect, it was the first Beatles recording that consummately channelled the manic energy they had mastered in Liverpool and Hamburg, and then finessed it: the track that set the template for such frantic mini-masterpieces as It Won't Be Long, I Want To Hold Your Hand and A Hard Day's Night.

She Loves You was released on August 23, and a week later it began a run in the singles chart of 31 consecutive weeks. For the whole of September, October, November and December, it was in the Top 3. It went to Number 1 on September 14, and stayed there for a month, before re-ascending to the top spot for another fortnight on November 30. Until McCartney released Mull Of Kintyre in 1977, it would stand as the biggest-selling UK single ever.

On October 13, She Loves You was the high point of The Beatles' four-song set when they appeared on the ITV show Sunday Night At The London Palladium, compered by Bruce Forsyth.

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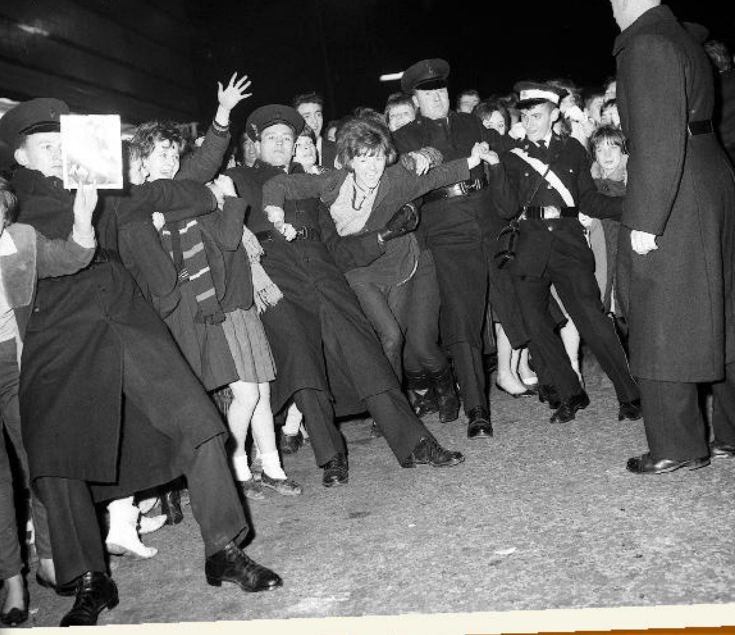
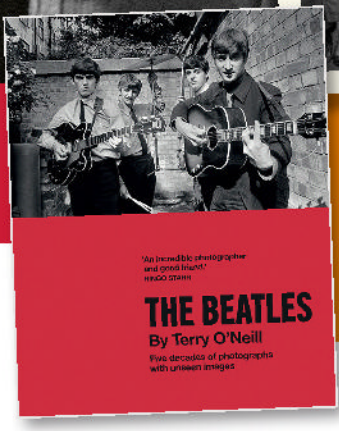
Never had it so good: (opposite, from top) Christine Keeler, March 29, 1963; Freddie And The Dreamers grab a nap amid '63's pop vortex; US President John F. Kennedy and UK Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, June 30, 1963; (right, from top) "young, new, cheerful", Paul and John check the reviews; Belfast fans await the Fabs' arrival, November 8, 1963.

Recording She Loves You/I'll Get You at Abbey Road, Studio 2, July 1, 1963. From the new book The Beatles By Terry O'Neill: Five Decades Of Photographs With Unseen Images. Published by Welbeck. Priced £30 hardback.

I WANT TO HOLD YOUR HAND
THIS BOY
THE BEATLES




'An incredible photographer and good friend.'
RINGO STARR
THE BEATLES
By Terry O'Neill
Five decades of photographs with unseen images

After all-day rehearsals, they topped the bill: Ringo would later confess being "so nervous with craziness and tension that I spewed up into a bucket." The show was watched by 15 million people, which was proof of how far they had come. But the occasion would come to signify much more: thanks to accounts of riotous scenes in almost all the following day's papers, this was the night that most versions of the band's history honour as Beatlemania's starting point.

"Police fought to hold back 1,000 squealing teenagers as The Beatles made their getaway after their Palladium TV show," said the Daily Mirror. Its story went on: "A Police motorcade stood by as the four pop idols dashed for their car. Then the fans went wild, breaking through a cordon of more than 60 policemen."

The report in the Daily Herald suggested something even bigger: "Nearly 2,000 teenage girls screaming 'We want The Beatles' battled through a panting police cordon outside the London Palladium last night… The siege began earlier in the day when The Beatles arrived for rehearsals… Fifty girls got into the stalls… A ring of commissionaires cornered the girls, who left when [they were] told that hoses would be turned on them."

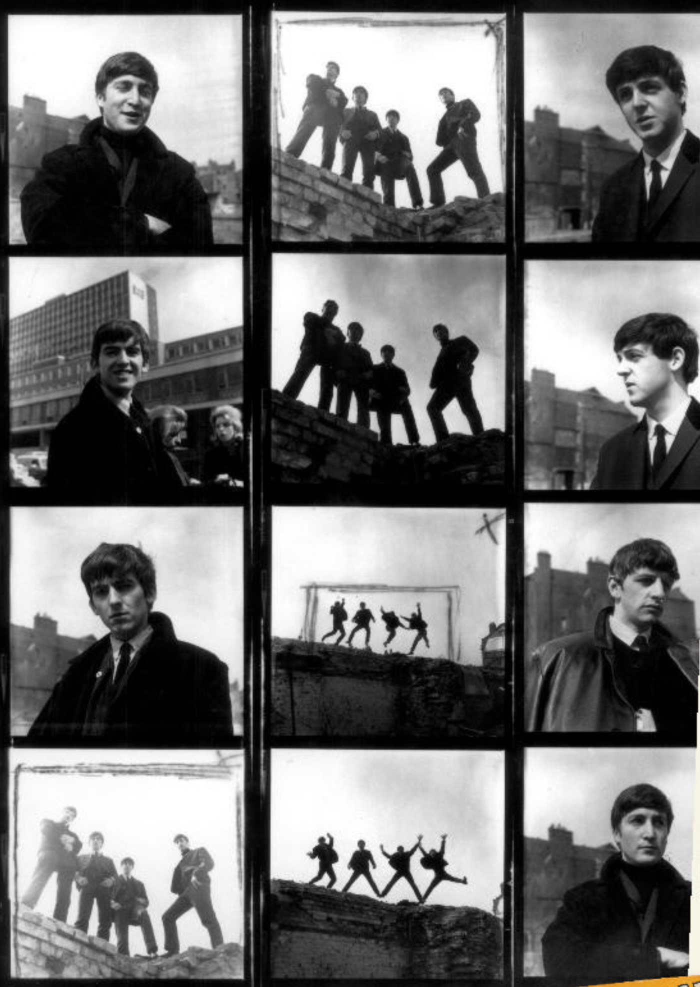
In other newspapers, the numbers were noticeably different: the Daily Express, for example, had 500 fans and 20 coppers. But at the core of all the coverage was something undeniably true. There were massed screams inside the Palladium: you can hear them on the recording, along with Lennon's shout of "Shut up!". And besides, whatever transpired that night, the papers were catching up with something that was happening already.

> **"police fought to hold back 1,000 squealing teenagers as the beatles made their getaway." THE DAILY MIRROR**

It had begun, inevitably, in Liverpool. In February '63, the Evening Standard journalist Maureen Cleave had written a very prescient piece focused on The Beatles' following in and around Merseyside, with the telling headline, "Why The Beatles create all that frenzy." And as they relentlessly toured, the screams spread. Listen to recordings of their spot at a BBC event called Swinging Sound '63 that took place at the Albert Hall in April, and you hear the sound, loud and clear: a strong taste of what was to come, matched by the music's barely-containable energy.

BUT BEATLEMANIA – A TERM FIRST COINED BY THE Daily Mail, on October 21 – was about more than that. It denoted the fact that in late 1963, The Beatles ceased to be a mere pop group, and turned into a national obsession, frenziedly written about in the press as the harbingers of a new, young Britain – or, as some other people saw it, a terrifying sign that the country was going to the dogs.

In early 1963, their schedule had included lunchtime sessions at The Cavern in Liverpool, as well as engagements at the El Rio club in Macclesfield, and a dance evening organised by the Wolverhampton Welfare Association. Even after Please Please Me had been a huge hit, their first substantial appearance in the national press had only come when John Lennon beat up Cavern DJ Bob Wooler at McCartney's 21st birthday party, when Wooler had made suggestive comments about John's holiday in Spain with Brian Epstein (the ➢



WEEK
THAT
DAVID FROST
WILLIAM RUSHTON
ROY KINNEAR
MILLICENT MARTIN
KENNETH COPE
LANCE PERCIVAL
DAVID KERNAN

THE BEATLES WIG

The nation's changing face: (clockwise from top left) The Beatles in Fiona Adams' famous Euston bombsite photoshoot, as used on the sleeve of Twist And Shout, London, April 18, 1963; the scream team turn it up at Exeter ABC, November 14, 1963; the cast of TV satire show That Was The Week That Was, January 12, 1963; the Queen Mother meets The Beatles, November 4, 1963.

"it takes too long to cultivate the hairstyle the beatles made popular. you have to settle for a wig." PATHÉ NEWS

≺ headline in the Mirror was "Beatle Brawl – Sorry I Socked You"). Now The Beatles were ubiquitous: the subject of questions in the House Of Commons and Sunday sermons; something for families to discuss over Sunday lunch, bores to hold forth about in the pub, and journalists to dissect on a daily basis.

"At first people just stared at their haircuts; a few even listened to their music," explained the American writer Michael Braun, whose book Love Me Do perfectly captures this phase of Beatles history. "Then gradually, as autumn turned to winter, all that could be heard from John O'Groats in the north to Land's End in the south was Beatles, Beatles, Beatles. The island that had bravely withstood invasion from outside for nearly 1,000 years had been conquered from within."

The country's surrender had happened for a few key reasons. Clearly, one was The Beatles themselves: the vivacious brilliance of their songs, their instantly-relatable collective personality, and the wonders of the image – the hair, the suits, the unified on-stage bow – that had cohered under Epstein's influence.

But there was also something bigger at work, bound up with the mysteries of politics, class, age, and social attitudes. In Britain, cultural change often coincides with long-standing governments losing their grip (punk rock and acid house marked similar shifts), and in 1963 the travails of an increasingly unpopular Conservative government appeared to signal the weakening of the old ruling class, a story complemented by the coming-of-age of a generation who were short of the deference and "mustn't grumble" mores that ran deep among their parents.

Midway through She Loves You's domination of the charts, the Conservative leader Harold MacMillan resigned as Prime Minister, to be replaced by Alec Douglas-Home, who combined an absurdly stiff upper lip and cut-glass accent with no television skills whatsoever. Meanwhile, the so-called Satire Boom was at its height: Private Eye magazine had published its first edition in 1961, and the TV show That Was The Week That Was made its debut in late 1962. In the wake of the Profumo affair, an increasingly exposed establishment was ripe for mockery: old hierarchies and conventions, it seemed, were suddenly being shaken.

At the same time, the post-war baby boom generation were into their teens, and from 1960 young men were no longer required to perform National Service. In the midst of full employment, young people suddenly had time and money: the perfect foundation for a new, home-grown pop culture. 1963 was the year that Mods went from being an underground cult to a burgeoning national craze, and ITV began broadcasting the whip-smart pop show Ready Steady Go!; the year, as Philip Larkin famously wrote, that "sexual intercourse began… between the end of the Chatterley ban and The Beatles' first LP."

1963, in other words, was as pivotal a 12 months in Britain as any of pop culture's more celebrated years, and The Beatles were the country's new mood incarnate, with She Loves You soundtracking the shock of the new. The "Yeah, yeah, yeah" refrain that had so jangled Jim McCartney's sensitivities perfectly encapsulated what they were offering; as if to hammer everything home, the single's B-side, I'll Get You, began "Oh yeah/Oh yeah".

Getty (4)

Here was the sound of the staid conventions of post-war showbiz running out of road – something the tastemakers whose world was full of crooners, all-round entertainers and the UK's milquetoast version of rock'n'roll stars soon realised. "It was exactly the story we'd been waiting for," said Don Short, the Daily Mirror's showbusiness correspondent. Up until '63, he said, he would habitually "go around to Claridges or the Savoy and interview Sammy Davis Jr one week, Andy Williams the next. But The Beatles had all this drama swirling around them – and they were sexy, a very sexy story."

The welcome most of the press extended to The Beatles was captured in an editorial run by Short's newspaper in early November, responding to a sniffy leader column in the Daily Telegraph that had compared the scenes at Beatles concerts to Hitler's Nuremberg rallies. Here, by contrast, was a frantic endorsement:

"You have to be a real sour square not to love the nutty, noisy, happy, handsome Beatles. Fact is that Beatle people are everywhere. From Wapping to Windsor. Aged seven to seventy. And it's plain to see why these four cheeky, energetic lads from Liverpool go down so big.

"They're young, new. They're high-spirited, cheerful. What a change from the self-pitying moaners, crooning their lovelorn tunes from the tortured shallows of lukewarm hearts…

"Youngsters like The Beatles are doing a good turn for show business – and the rest of us – with their new sounds, new looks.

"Good luck Beatles!"

TEN DAYS AFTER THE PALLADIUM SHOW, THE BEATLES flew to Sweden, where they played a short run of concerts, and appeared on a TV show called Drop In. There were striking scenes there, too: in Stockholm, around 40 policemen with batons guarded the stage as The Beatles played, but some fans still managed to break through, knocking George Harrison to the floor. When they flew back into Heathrow, hundreds of teenage girls had gathered on the roof of the Queen's Building to deafeningly welcome them home. Among the other notable travellers who passed through the airport, all but unnoticed, were the newly-crowned Miss World and Alec Douglas-Home.

There were then two dates of an autumn tour, before a Royal Command Performance at London's Prince Of Wales Theatre, televised the following week to an audience of 21 million. Momentarily, Beatlemania seemed tamed: in the gaps between From Me To You, She Loves You, and Till There Was You there was the sobering sound of silence, although McCartney's "How are yer – all right?" and use of the word "Ta" gently lived up to The Beatles' irreverent reputation. So did the moment, before Twist And Shout, when Lennon dispensed his now-famous suggestion that the wealthier members of the audience might show their appreciation by rattling their jewellery. And that was that: two bows to the audience, one to the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and the latter's then-husband Lord Snowdon, and the guarantee of even more delirious coverage in the papers. "Night of triumph for four young men," said the Daily Mail, also telling its readers – whether accurately or not – that "the Royal Box was stomping."

The Beatles then got back to touring, earning £300 a night in the company of a Bristol-based quartet called The Kestrels, the Canadian compere Frank Berry, and The Vernons Girls, a vocal trio whose roots lay in the Liverpool football pools company of the same name. Most of the shows – which included a stop in Dublin – took place in cinemas. They played the same set each time, in less than half an hour: I Saw Her Standing There, From Me To You, All My Loving, You Really Got A Hold On Me, Roll Over Beethoven, Boys, Till There Was You, She Loves You, Money (That's What I Want) and Twist And Shout.

There had been disorder even when the tickets went on sale: stampedes, smashed glass, treatment for injured fans from ambulance crews. In Leicester, the police had turned up with dogs. But when The Beatles actually played, the intensity reached frightening levels. From the perspective of the 21st century, the combina- ➢

no sad tomorrow

10 beatles recordings that cut through the screams of 1963. by john harris

PLEASE PLEASE ME – THE BEATLES
mono
PARLOPHONE
THE BEATLES
PLEASE PLEASE ME
with Love Me Do
and 12 other songs

I saw her standing there

(from Please Please Me, released March 22)

If any song starts the revolution it's this one, something captured by Paul's edited-in count-in – "One two three *fah*!" – and everything that happens afterwards. In Liverpool and Hamburg, live versions had stretched for as long as 10 minutes. Can you imagine?

there's a place

(from Please Please Me, released March 22)

Mostly written by Lennon under the influence of Motown – and notable for a depth that was virtually unprecedented back then. The place he goes when "I feel low" is "my mind" – a lyrical glance ahead to what really bloomed circa '65-66.

boys

(from Please Please Me, released March 22)

The '63 Beatles had a distinctly androgynous aspect – as evidenced not just by their hair, but a fondness for such faithful renditions of girl-group songs as this Ringo-led Shirelles cover. "We just sang it the way they'd sung it and never considered any implications," said Paul.

some other guy

(from Live At The BBC, originally broadcast June 23)

A great example of the visceral sound busting into Britain's radio sets: a gloriously raw Cavern Club staple, originally released the previous year by the Philadelphia-born R&B man Richie Barrett. The guitars audibly go into the red, as presumably intended.

long tall sally

(from Live At The BBC, originally broadcast August 13)

Released as the title track of the EP they put out in June '64, but played here on the radio show Pop Go The Beatles. No British rocker had ever sounded like Paul doing his best Little Richard; few UK bands had delivered music with quite this power.

she loves you

(from The Beatles Bootleg Recordings 1963 on Apple Music, originally broadcast October 20)

Taped in front of a screaming audience for BBC radio, seven days after the UK press announced the start of Beatlemania. Delivered perfectly, but listen to the 10 seconds of noise that comes after the final chord: this is what was now gripping the country.

money (that's what I want)

(from Anthology 1, originally broadcast November 11)

The version of this Berry Gordy/Janie Bradford Motown classic on *With The Beatles* is great, but this treatment – taped in Stockholm in October – showcases the magic they worked live. The vocals are jaw-dropping: not just John's searing lead part, but Paul and George's equally incendiary BVs.

THE BEATLES
The Savage Young
BEATLES
Recorded by THE BEATLES

It won't be long

(from With The Beatles, released November 22)

"My attempt at writing another single," said John, but ideally suited to its role as the frantic opening burst on *With The Beatles*. As with She Loves You and All My Loving, the no-intro kickstart captures the sheer pace of their lives in late '63.

all my loving

(from With The Beatles, released November 22)

Written by Paul on tour, and simply perfect: in 1980, John said it was "a damn good piece of work". George's guitar break is pure Carl Perkins; John probably took his brilliant rhythm part from The Crystals' Da Doo Ron Ron.

I want to hold your hand

(from On Air – Live at The BBC (Vol. 2), broadcast December 26)

Familiarity shouldn't blind anyone to this song's wonderment. The single version is definitive, but this live version – taped for a BBC radio special titled From Us To You – contains all the thrill of 1963 and all the promise of another extraordinary year to come.

THE BEATLES
BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
Live at the BBC

< tion of crowds of young women and girls and lines of uniformed men sometimes seems shocking. But in 1963, such scenes were reported as a sort of amusingly predictable national ritual.

The Hull Daily Mail's report of The Beatles' two shows in the city was a perfect case in point. "After the first house [ie. show] mounted police had to clear a way through thousands of excited teenagers to allow buses to enter Ferensway station," it said. The team of 22 stewards reportedly included four rugby league players, all internationals. "Twelve girls fainted during the first performance and another eleven during the second… As soon as the final curtain fell they left their instruments and made a dash through the back stage door into a waiting police van… The manager of the ABC cinema, Mr B. Fisher, praised the police. He said: 'They did a wonderful job.'"

BY NOW, BEATLEMANIA HAD STARTED TO BREAK free of The Beatles themselves: picking through the press archives from the weeks leading up to that Christmas, it is remarkable how many stories have no direct link to the band and their music.

One staple of British newspapers in late 1963 was the story of a school where the powers-that-be had outlawed moptop hair. On November 15, for example, Kent's Herne Bay Press had big news: "Boys of Chatham House Grammar School, Ramsgate, have been banned from having 'Beatle haircuts'. The fringe-cut ban was announced by the Headmaster (Mr W.P. Pearce) when the 700 pupils were at assembly on their first day after the half-term holiday."

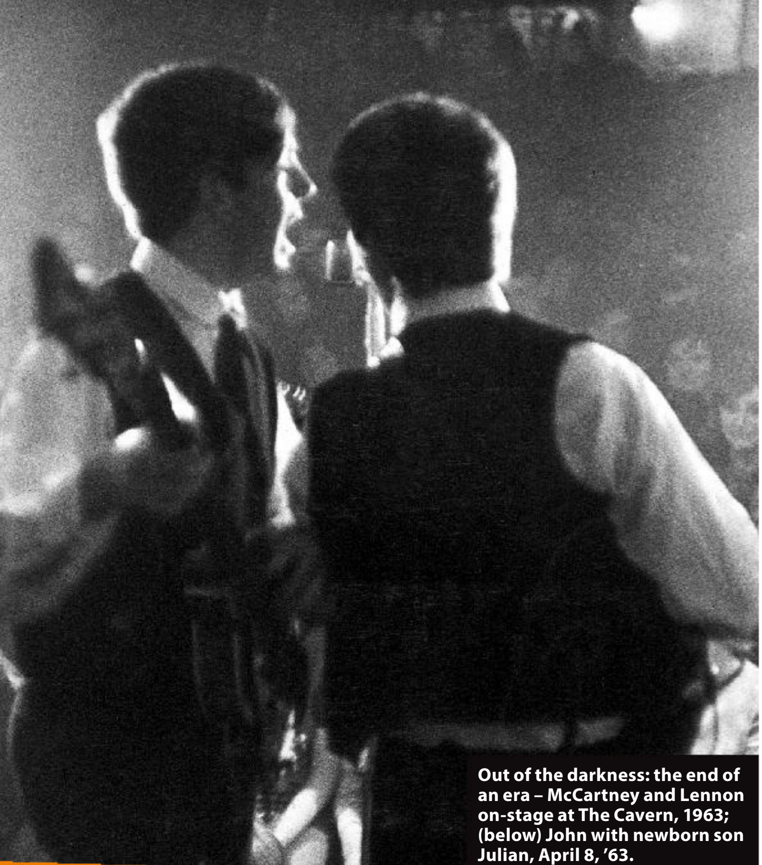
At an unnamed engineering firm in Birkenhead, anti-Beatles measures were even more draconian, thanks to a manager named William Karpinski. "He took a long look at the 29 Beatle-headed apprentices at his works and roared: 'Get your hair cut,' reported the Daily Herald. "And to make sure that none of the boys return to the Mersey style, Mr Karpinski has ordered regular hair-cut inspections. One boy, 16-year-old Tom Charnock, has been suspended from work for a fortnight because he ignored a warning to get his hair trimmed. Mr Karpinski said yesterday: 'These ridiculous hair-styles are not reasonable, not hygienic and not smart. I will not have them.'"

Beyond tonsorial matters, there were Beatles-related stories about politics. The Wembley News managed to fuse Beatlemania with a *Zeitgeist*-y hint of Cold War paranoia. "A photograph of The Beatles on the cover of a magazine being sold in Wembley High Road by members of the Young Communist League recently has led to a denial from their manager, Mr Brian Epstein, that the group intends to join the Young Communists," it said.

Even crime reporters wanted a piece of the action. In early December, the Daily Mirror ran an absolute peach of a story: "Printer Arnold Spencer forged thousands of driving licences, worth £5 each in the underworld. But he told a jury yesterday that he did it to cash in on The Beatles. 'Everyone is getting in on the act,' said Spencer, 21, at the Old Bailey. 'I was going to print a funny caption on the covers of these licences, saying "The Beatles drive me crazy".' But the jury found Spencer, of Kentish Town, London, guilty of forgery, and he was jailed for two years."

The hapless Mr Spencer had definitely been onto something, as another feature of the autumn and winter's madness proved. Beatlemania meant money and, as Christmas approached, there was a massed rush to cash in. In Drogheda, Ireland, a shoe shop called Connolly's had a simple sales pitch: "Young men – get on the Beatle wagon with a pair of NEW BEATLE BOOTS! First time in Ireland." A clothing manufacturer in Leicester was offering head-to-toe apparel: "Beatle" suits ("in real trad patterns"), jackets, shirts, and "raincoats and overcoats". There were frantically-produced toy guitars, aprons, ashtrays and "Beatle lockets". In Liverpool, Scott's bakery had introduced a new doughnut-like creation, wrapped in packaging featuring all four Beatle faces, and called the "Ringo Roll".

The whole unseemly frenzy was captured in a short film – made by the Pathé newsreel company – of a factory where a large team of people were now dedicated manufacturers of Beatles wigs. The



Out of the darkness: the end of an era – McCartney and Lennon on-stage at The Cavern, 1963; (below) John with newborn son Julian, April 8, '63.

"we all felt it was their swan song"

On August 3, 1963, the beatles played their last ever show at The Cavern. It was a bittersweet watershed, reports danny eccleston

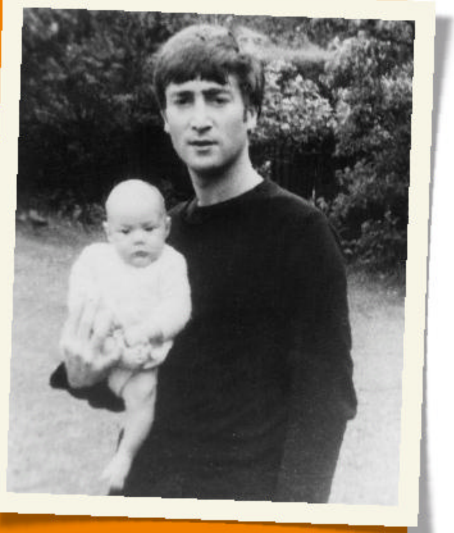
AMONG THE astonishing 250-plus shows that The Beatles played in 1963, a couple were especially poignant. On April 8, The Beatles were entertaining the Swimming Baths in Leyton, east London, while Cynthia Lennon was alone in Sefton General Hospital, Liverpool, giving birth to Julian. It was not yet necessarily the custom for fathers to attend births in 1963, but even so, Lennon would not have a moment to meet his first-born until April 11, squeezed between shows in Birkenhead and Middleton.

Another significant gig was the August 3 booking at their former proving ground, The Cavern. Since the most recent of their 280-plus previous engagements at the Mathew St cellar on April 12, the tenor of the fans had changed. Quoted in Spencer Leigh's book, The Cavern, club doorman Paddy Delaney recalled, "The crowds outside were going mad. By the time John Lennon had got through the cordon of girls, his mohair jacket had lost a sleeve. I grabbed it to stop a girl getting away with a souvenir. John stitched it back on."

Cavern DJ Bob Wooler told Leigh that The Beatles, sharing the bill with The Escorts, The Merseybeats, The Road Runners, Johnny Ringo & The Colts, and Faron's Flamingos, were paid £300 – "quite a bit of money then" – which meant the club, charging 10 shillings for 500 tickets, made a loss. Tony Crane of The Merseybeats sensed a certain sniffiness on Lennon's behalf regarding the venue's customary slick of condensation and primitive facilities – The Beatles had already got used to better – but the band's actual performance was familiarly peppy, with an impromptu acoustic When I'm 64 filling in during a short power cut.

"The Beatles were very professional," noted Wooler, before acknowledging the end of an era. "We all felt it was their swan song and that we would never have them at The Cavern again."

And, with The Beatles still allegedly owing six dates on a Cavern contract they would never ultimately honour, such proved to be the case.



Premium Rockshot, Getty (2), © Apple Corps Ltd

Merry Christmas for the Beatles

> **"the fans gave, record companies gave, the media gave, but we gave our nervous systems." GEORGE HARRISON**

product was nothing less than "an instant Merseybeat hairdo", ideal for anyone who had been forced into a haircut by their headmaster. "It takes too long to cultivate the hairstyle they've made popular – at any rate, starting now you can't achieve it by Christmas," said the narrator. "You have to settle for a wig."

Here, it seemed, was the inevitable flipside of pop success: cheap and nasty profiteering, which seemed completely out of control. Thanks to Brian Epstein, there were official Beatle products, which adhered to reasonable standards of quality. Those who made much shabbier stuff sometimes sidestepped copyright law by using the word "Beetles", but others were more brazen, knowing that the legal niceties would be lost in the festive season's deluge.

mono
PARLOPHONE
with the beatles

One of the most brilliant aspects of The Beatles' career burns through this period. Thanks to their own impeccable taste and collective intelligence – and the influence of Epstein and George Martin – they kept their own output stylish and creditably non-exploitative. On November 22, Parlophone released *With The Beatles*, an artefact whose presentation was about as far from Beatlemania as could be imagined. Robert Freeman's monochrome band portrait, inspired by the half-shadowed pictures Astrid Kirchherr had taken of the band in Hamburg, looked more like the kind of image that might adorn a blues or jazz album. There were no singles included: its 14 songs – which included seven Lennon-McCartney originals, a single composition by George Harrison, and covers of material by artists including Chuck Berry and Smokey Robinson – were all completely new. Here was proof of what would see them through all the madness: although the screams and hype were now an integral part of their lives, they would not be defined by them.

I Want To Hold Your Hand followed a week later, backed with This Boy. It was their first completely perfect single: an A-side whose mood was utterly ecstatic, with a beautifully doleful flip whose three-part harmonies and searing middle section – led by Lennon – evoked the complete opposite. It had advance orders of over a million. A week after it was released, it knocked She Loves You off the top of the singles chart.

You can't see the join: (clockwise from above) Paul and George observe as Eric Morecambe fits Ringo with a Beatle wig on the Morecambe & Wise Show, December 3, 1963; having a Fab Yule, '63; keeping an eye out at Ferensway ABC, Hull, November 24, 1963, where "12 girls fainted during the first performance and another 11 during the second".

BEATLEMANIA, MEANWHILE, SPED ON. In this phase of their career, the four of them still seemed awed by what they had let loose. But what was happening was taking an inevitable toll. As they played into all those screams, their skills as a live act were effectively frozen; in time, they would also be aware of Beatlemania's insidious psychological effects. "The fans gave, record companies gave, the media gave, but we gave our nervous systems," said George Harrison, 30 years later. "We were the ones that were hounded day and night, regardless of where we were, or what country we were in, and it was a nervous system thing."

On the same day *With The Beatles* was released – a day the group performed at the Globe Cinema in Stockton-On-Tees, and an item on the CBS Morning News chalked up their first national media coverage in the US – John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. By another unfathomable coincidence, a month earlier, as they returned from Sweden to all those screams, among those witnessing the scenes at Heathrow had been Ed Sullivan. The TV host and impresario had resolved to investigate further…

Suddenly, a much bigger country was in need of joy, excitement and the shock of the new. Less than two months later, The Beatles landed at the newly-renamed John F. Kennedy Airport. Here it all was, once again: noise, obsession and a kind of mass delirium, but this time taken to such an extreme it felt like something that no one had expected – the truth of She Loves You's manic prophecy taken to a completely different level. Ⓜ

Cheer up, Brian Christinzio – it's already happened, and, as BC CAMPLIGHT, you've likely written a song about it. Death, drugs, disease, demons, deportation, dashed romance, and, for this man of the eastern US, unlikely sanctuary in the north of England: "My story is pretty warty," he warns MARTIN ASTON.

Photography by **FRANCESCA PIDGEON**

"HOW WARTY DOES MOJO LIKE TO GO?" ASKS BRIAN CHRISTINZIO. "Because my story is pretty warty."

For instance, there's the state he was in in 2012. The New Jersey-born singer and songwriter ("don't say 'singer-songwriter', that makes me think of James Taylor on a stool and I'm not that guy") was squatting an abandoned church in Philadelphia, siphoning electricity from neighbours and selling equipment that he'd borrowed off friends. "I was an absolute scumbag," he says, staring down at his coffee. "I was drinking, doing way too many drugs, losing friends and feeling angry and bitter."

On two albums as BC Camplight, Christinzio's elegant and eloquent piano-based pop – equal parts Brian Wilson, Harry Nilsson and Lou Christie – had been met by critical bouquets but demoralising sales. Beset by an anxiety disorder, he reckoned he'd already "blown it". Adding insult to perceived injury, he'd played piano on Sharon Van Etten's album *Epic* and seen members of his live band, Dave Hartley (bass) and Robbie Bennett (keys), join The War On Drugs, both local favourites blowing up with the success he'd anticipated for himself.

"I was seething!" he says. "And mad at myself, like, What *are* you doing? Do something, or you're going to drop to the bottom of the ocean. And if you stay in Philly, you die, or go to jail."

Christinzio roused himself to ask his Facebook followers if anyone knew of a flat in London he could escape to. "I'd fucked up so much, I was running away," he sighs. A journalist friend stepped in to offer refuge in Manchester instead, and four days later Christinzio was outside the Castle Hotel pub-cum-venue in the city's Northern Quarter to pick up keys. Eleven years later, he's still here. "Manchester represented a life," he adds. "A place that meant that the old Brian was dead." ➢

Francesca Pidgeon

“Wanna buy me a beer?”: Brian Christinzio, AKA BC Camplight, The Peer Hat, North Quarter, Manchester, 2023.

“People with anxieties and fears can sense that in me and my music”: Brian Christinzio, Castle Hotel, Oldham Street, Manchester, 2023; (below) forthcoming LP *The Last Rotation Of Earth*, the “record that’s keeping me going.”

The life of Brian: (opposite page, clockwise from top left) Christinzio with his old band in session on Marc Riley’s BBC 6 Music show, 2016; performing at the End Of The Road festival, Dorset, 2019; clowning about at Islington Mill rehearsal studio, 2018; Christinzio rocking the bowler in 2007.

“WHAT FIRST DREW ME TO MANCHESTER WAS THE SHIT WEATHER. IT BRINGS EVERYONE DOWN TO MY LEVEL.”
Brian Christinzio

THE LAST ROTATION OF EARTH

THE ‘OLD’ BRIAN MAY BE GONE BUT the ‘new’ Brian remains feisty and opinionated. Christinzio, now 43, meets MOJO at Manchester Piccadilly station, and walking through the concourse he spies a piano for members of the public to play. “There’s something so immediate and romantic about the piano,” he starts. “So, when I see people pounding on it, it makes me ill. It’s an instrument. You wouldn’t leave a dentist’s drill lying around in the middle of a train station. Playing bad music in front of people is just as dangerous.”

Settling down to a full English fry-up at the Koffee Pot on Oldham Street – where he once washed dishes to make ends meet – Christinzio visibly relaxes, and begins to wax lyrical about his adopted home city.

“What first drew me to Manchester was the shit weather,” he says, “because it brings everyone down to my level. I remember walking down this street; I didn’t have five pounds in my pocket but I had the energy of new friends in a new city, and writing all this new music, which hadn’t happened in ages. What a relief that was. Anyway, I consider myself Mancunian now. I never felt American anyway, but more like an alien.”

Christinzio looks more like a bear than an alien, dressed in black except for a rust-coloured beanie with tufts of black hair escaping out the back. He’s jovial and garrulous, but it masks a history of unease. Young Brian would look at photos of family members and fret about when they would die. At the same time, he was obsessed with Jerry Lee Lewis, discovered in his mother’s record collection and encouraging him to stick with piano lessons (Frankie Valli and other high voices were a similar influence on his own).

Christinzio’s anxieties abated in high school – “I was captain of the football team, and my girlfriend was prom queen” – but exploded right after, “like a switch had been flipped.” Suffering overwhelming bouts of hypochondria and neurological disorders, he was hospitalised several times. A thyroid-related auto-immune condition has been diagnosed, but medication hasn’t worked. “It’s all just a big, muddy ball,” he sighs.

LUCKY, THEN, THAT CHRISTINZIO turned out to be a master at turning adversity into art. Every album he has recorded since moving to Manchester has been preceded by some mishap or calamity, but has improved on the last, with increasingly inventive and dramatic arrangements laced with injections of scabrous humour. Recent years have been particularly brutal. The sudden death of his father in 2018 sent Christinzio “into a spiral worse than any time since my twenties.” Lockdown made matters worse – “I had too much time to think” – and in early 2022, his fiancée and partner of nine years threw in the towel.

“I don’t want to say her leaving was the worst thing that ever happened to me, that would be loading everything on to her,” he says. “She’s not the reason I am where I am. It’s the illness that I’ve battled my whole life.”

The devastation at being single again informs his new album, *The Last Rotation Of Earth*. “It’s a more expansive, cinematic record than before – it’s got half the fucking Liverpool Philharmonic on it! – but it’s very real and raw, more stripped of any ambiguities,” he says. “This record is what’s keeping me going. That’s the silver lining.”

There is another: it seems that the more Christinzio suffers, the more popular he becomes. 2020 album *Shortly After Takeoff* (a reference to the crash brought on by his father’s death) was a hit on BBC 6 Music. The biggest tour of his life begins this November, and includes shows at London’s Shepherd’s Bush Empire and Manchester’s Albert Hall. Just days after he talks to MOJO, tempting fate, he tweets, “Things seem to be going very well all of a sudden.”

JUDGING BY THEIR PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA, Christinzio’s fans are not lacking in fervour. The singer reckons they appreciate his authenticity. “People with anxieties

Francesca Pidgeon, Courtesy Michelle Choudhry/BBC, Camera Press, Alamy

DISASTER MOVIES

The trials of BC Camplight, on album.
By **Martin Aston**.

HIDE, RUN AWAY

★★★

(One Little Indian, 2005)

Christinzio’s debut is clever and crafted but musically lightweight compared to later albums – closer to Ben Folds Five than he’d like. Lyrically, self-loathing is a motif; opener Couldn’t You Tell advises “and if you offer me a second chance, I would quickly need another.”

BLINK OF A NIHILIST

★★★

(One Little Indian, 2007)

Containing hints of the complexity to come, *Blink*… edges into territory occupied by The Shins. But with a UK record label, Christinzio lacked exposure in his home country, and was out of sync with UK audiences. Maybe buyers were put off by the terrible cover?

HOW TO DIE IN THE NORTH

★★★★

(Bella Union, 2015)

That second chance he mentioned, made over two years on a tiny budget, with guitars, synths and Motown influences thrown into the mix. “I wanted the record to sound warm and take you in, but like it was degenerating and even confusing at times,” he says.

DEPORTATION BLUES

★★★★

(Bella Union, 2018)

Recorded in “a dark cubby-hole” in Liverpool (Christinzio having been priced out of Manchester), *DB* goes darker – “and ballsier,” he says – dipping into ’80s synth-pop, robotic funk, ’50s rock’n’roll and musical theatre, edging away from piano-pop. And that’s just the title track.

SHORTLY AFTER TAKEOFF

★★★★

(Bella Union, 2020)

Resolved to push on pushing boundaries, Christinzio delivers a stand-up routine about meeting his dead dad (Ghosthunting) and pens him a beautiful eulogy (the closing Angelo). Meanwhile, I Want To Be In The Mafia and Arm Around Your Sadness confirm his commitment to melody.

and fears can sense that in me and my music,” he says. “You can’t bullshit people – well, you can, but they’ll forget you by the next record.”

He’s also proud that progress has been made without pandering to a commercial style. BC Camplight songs can turn on a dime: a gorgeous chord progression might be interrupted by a metallic blast of guitar, or a honeyed melody hijacked by what sounds like a stage musical’s chorus line. Christinzio assembles the jagged pieces like a jigsaw, much as Brian Wilson did on The Beach Boys’ *Smile*, a bootleg of which the singer discovered when he was 19.

“Music is a mirror of the person that creates it,” he says. “That’s just my brain’s blips and short-circuits. Plus, I get bored extremely easily. We’ve reached this weird stage in music when it’s all verse-chorus-middle-eight-chorus, and I’ve never understood why. So what if I want to put a lawnmower in the middle of a power ballad?”

There are no lawnmowers on *The Last Rotation Of Earth*, though Christinzio approaches power balladry on She’s Gone Cold, one of two songs that dramatise conversations with his ex. The title track, meanwhile, ponders suicide – as did the first album he made in Manchester, 2015’s *How To Die In The North*. “I thought I might come here and drink myself to death,” he recalls. “A real Leaving Las Vegas vibe.”

Continuing a theme of literal album titles, 2018’s *Deportation Blues* reflected his next existential crisis. In early 2015, Christinzio fell and impaled his foot on a spike in the smoking zone at the Castle Hotel. The wound became infected (“I couldn’t put weight on my leg for months”) and a doctor suggested he shouldn’t fly, leading to the singer overstaying the limit on his UK work visa.

“So I was deported,” he sighs. “The next thing, I’m playing Pac-Man in my parents’ basement in New Jersey, thinking, This is my life now.”

THE TRAGI-COMEDY DIDN’T END there. Christinzio was able to return to the UK with an Italian passport, courtesy of his grandparents (he now has permanent residency), but did not feel restored. “I was just destroyed by the stress,” he says.

And the blows kept coming. His father died just days before *Deportation Blues* was released. *Shortly After Takeoff* arrived just as Covid hit, meaning he couldn’t tour the record for a year. “One main source of pride is live performance,” he says. “And I feel more human on-stage than off. I can rarely look people in the eye – like when the waiter comes over to take my order – but I can stand in front of a thousand people and look them all in the eye. I wish a doctor could tell me why.”

The subject of mental health is something very close to Christinzio’s heart. “It’s insane to me that talking about mental health is still taboo,” he says. “When I get messages like, ‘I was having a really tough time, I wanted you to know your music helped,’ it’s worth a fortune to me. It makes me feel like it’s worth being this real, and honest.

“I mean, I’m never going to be Coldplay,” he concludes. “All I need for my soul is the validation that the shit I’ve put myself through in the last 20 years has been worth it.” Ⓜ

BETWEEN THE GUTTER AND THE STARS

A 20-PAGE CELEBRATION

IT WAS A DIRTY JOB, BUT SOMEONE HAD TO do it. Possibly he had no choice.

Lewis Allan Reed's contributions to rock'n'roll were unique and compelling, but it also seemed that he was *compelled*. The steady gaze he trained on the sides of life others found uncomfortable – drugs, sex, violence, poverty, human folly and desperation – seemed at times his real addiction, although there were others.

Born in Brooklyn in 1942 but raised in exile in suburban Freeport, Long Island, he was electrified first by doo wop and R&B, then by ECT as his parents sought a cure for what were considered aberrant behaviours. Later, his fluid sexuality, narcotic experiments, brooding defiance and zeal for fearless literature were embodied in The Velvet Underground, whose four Lou-fronted studio albums invented the idea of a pop music that opposed the mainstream. With avant-garde input from violist John Cale, Bo Diddley propulsion from drummer Moe Tucker and the versatile support of guitarist Sterling Morrison, plus contributions by German singer Nico and, later, Doug and Billy Yule, the VU were capable of unprecedented sonic assault, ballads of trembling longing, and joyous paeans to the force they channelled: rock'n'roll.

Lack of success in their time drove Reed to leave the VU, but his solo career rarely pandered. *Transformer*, the exquisite 1972 album he made with David Bowie, was the hit he often disavowed. Rather, he would follow his passions – for feedback, for Edgar Allan Poe, for Tai Chi – whether or not fans went with him. Often he seemed to prefer a lonelier path; other times – as when honouring friends and mentors Andy Warhol and Doc Pomus on *Songs For Drella* and *Magic And Loss* – a softer, humbler Reed would allow himself to be seen. Ultimately, he resisted explanation or typecasting of any sort.

Ten years since he passed from liver disease aged 71, his implacable spirit lives in the 50 songs that follow...

PLUS!

CITY OF TEARS

***Berlin* at 50. David Fricke acclaims Reed's solo masterpiece with help from Bob Ezrin and Steve Hunter.**

ROCK AND ROLL HEARTS:

John Aizlewood, Martin Aston, Jenny Bulley, Keith Cameron, Chris Catchpole, Andy Cowan, Grayson Haver Currin, Bill DeMain, Dave DiMartino, Tom Doyle, Danny Eccleston, Pat Gilbert, Ian Harrison, Will Hodgkinson, Jim Irvin, Ted Kessler, Dorian Lynskey, Andrew Male, John Mulvey, Kris Needs, Chris Nelson, Mark Paytress, Andrew Perry, Jon Savage, Victoria Segal, Sylvie Simmons, Mat Snow, Jim Wirth.

Illustration by Clayton Hickman, Sarah Hampson and Mark Wagstaff/Alamy

LOU REED
the Raven
ANIMAL SERENADE
The Blue Mask
STREET HASSLE
kansas city
LULU
Andy Warhol
the velvet underground
LOU REED TRANSFORMER
NEW SENSATIONS
MISTRIAL
METAL MACHINE MUSIC
LOU REED LIVE
SALLY CAN'T DANCE
THE BELLS
MAGIC AND LOSS

THE 50 GREATEST LOU REED AND THE VELVET UNDERGROUND SONGS

50 THE VIEW

(from *Lulu*, 2011)

Metallica's almighty noise carries Lou's immortal commands.

"It was so impulsive," Lars Ulrich said of the 10 days his Metallica and Reed wailed and walloped in northern California, "it'll take me years to access what happened." And so it's gone for many with *Lulu*, the combo's wrongly dismissed transformation of a 19th century drama about a licentious, murderous maven into poetic metallurgy. The View is their masterful power play, its three-guitar roar the forged shield upon which Reed inscribes his demands – sex and submission, omnipotence and awe. *GHC*

49 EDGAR ALLAN POE

(from *The Raven*, 2003)

A descent into the maelstrom.

Reed's idea to re-imagine Poe's life and work in an experimental double-LP of songs and poems stemmed from a 2000 theatre production. With commendable perversity, the piece's signature rocker, Edgar Allan Poe – horn-driven, raunchy and joyously cornball as it describes a litany of "carnage", "decapitations", "poisonings" – bears little relation to the spectral flow and angry metal elsewhere on the record. That Poe holds a mirror to Reed's own interior, a similarly lively cesspit of trickery, vengefulness, fantasy and noir, suddenly seems obvious. "Not exactly the boy next door!" he trills on the chorus. Quite. *PG*

48 LEGENDARY HEARTS

(from *Legendary Hearts*, 1983)

Troubled times, troubled song, untroubled melody.

Studio squabbling with soon-to-depart guitarist Robert Quine ensured that recording *Legendary Hearts* was an unhappy experience, but Quine's insistence that Reed's production almost erased his work didn't always ring true, especially on the beautifully layered title track, where his and Reed's guitars quietly duel. In contrast to the self-lacerating lyric ("I'm good for just a kiss, not legendary love"), the gorgeously lolloping melody was so catchy that perhaps for the only time in his career Reed clapped along with himself in the budget-conscious video. *JA*

47 METAL MACHINE MUSIC, A-1 – A-4

(from *Metal Machine Music*, 1975)

Meticulous noise, far from chaos.

Lou Reed
METAL MACHINE MUSIC

Metal Machine Music is the critical and commercial failure whose locked grooves and unrelenting influence on a half-century of seekers mean its sculptural screech has never actually stopped. Recorded nocturnally and alone with minimal gear, *Metal* finds unending beauty within New York's endless industrial din, feedback sheets and squelching circuits creating harmonies that feel like phantoms, until they refuse to fade. Reed obviously didn't invent harsh noise or atonal excess; within the context of rock'n'roll, however, he rightly argued it could be enough. *GHC*

Getty

"Lou Took Us Out Of Our Comfort Zone"

LARS ULRICH is still sticking up for *Lulu*.

With *Lulu*, we had a chance to get to a creative place we'd never been, and Lou's lyrics inspired that. Lou took us out of our comfort zone. The lyrics were angry, spiteful, awkward, and beautiful, and all made sense. It was a cohesive work that had almost every human emotion.

When *Lulu* was released, there was intensity in how people reacted. A negative one. What the fuck is it about *Lulu* that it got that kind of reaction? I can't quite figure it out, but years later, it's aged extremely well. It sounds like a motherfucker still. So I can only put the reaction down to ignorance. It brings out all kinds of emotions, and everyone is now a critic with a keyboard at their fingertips. It took our fans to a place I wish they would go more often. Maybe it would be a better time to release it now with what's going on outside in the world, the chaos. I don't know, but I am very proud of this record. The music and everything that came out of this collaboration was so precious and so alive. It was all created in these flashes of impulsive energy, and all these things just happened. James [Hetfield] and I would be figuring out ways through a piece of music and then Lou would look over and go, "That's it. I'm not doing another fucking take of that." It's not the way we usually worked, but it was so beautiful and great, the whole thing.

Extracted from The Art Of The Straight Line: My Tai Chi by Lou Reed and Laurie Anderson, published by Faber & Faber, price £30.

46 RIPTIDE

(from *Set The Twilight Reeling*, 1996)

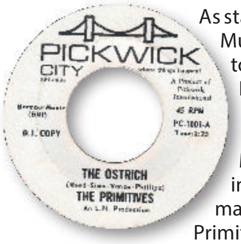
Guitars, guitars and then some more guitars.

By the time of the dense, sprawling *Set The Twilight Reeling*, Reed was into texture as much as song and nowhere more so than on the album's lengthy but exhilarating centrepiece, the very essence of his mid-'90s work. The lyric namechecks Van Gogh, but Reed paints a picture of a world out of control. More crucial are the wholly *in*-control guitars, where Reed cranks out a giant riff over which he deploys Glenn Branca/Sonic Youth-style layering. Heroic. *JA*

45 THE OSTRICH

(The Primitives single, 1964)

"Everybody get down on your face, man."

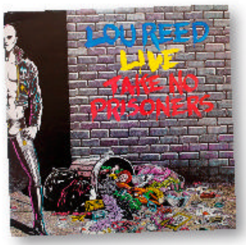


As staff writer at Pickwick Music, Reed was required to milk pop trends. Dance songs – Twist, Madison, Hully Gully – were all the rage. Most, however, weren't introduced via such a malevolent racket as The Primitives' lone, ultra-rare 45. After an ersatz live intro, a Then He Kissed Me riff is laid over a stomping beat. Lou barks surreal instructions while his comrades squeal the title by way of a chorus. As deliciously crude as Louie Louie, it's a wonder it never caught on. *JI*

44 LEAVE ME ALONE

(from *Live: Take No Prisoners*, 1978)

A hell of an end to a hell of a show.



Reed's *Street Hassle* songs, already a challenge to delicate sensibilities, are in their element on this live album to end them all. If I Wanna Be Black is the ballsiest move (what with the liberal n-wording), Leave Me Alone is the performance that turns studio lead into spontaneously unhinged scuzz-rock gold. It's not *just* faster, nastier, fuzzier, and borderline unintelligible. It's the closest Reed ever came to reanimating the sheer, libertarian chaos of *White Light/White Heat*-era Velvet Underground. *DE*

43 LIKE A POSSUM

(from *Ecstasy*, 2000)

Suite for feedback and angry man.

The cover of *Ecstasy* appears to show Reed in the throes of orgasm – which, if nothing else, gave sceptics the opportunity to draw crude masturbatory parallels with the album's contents. Chief target was Like A Possum, an 18-minute squalor-fest rich with crack, butt, used condoms and "roller-bladers giving head". Yet the gutter provocations and bludgeoning grind gradually take on a purgative, then meditative, quality – the noise-rock equivalent of a gong bath, from which you might just emerge, as Reed threatens, "Calm as an angel". *JM*

42 LAST GREAT AMERICAN WHALE

(from *New York*, 1989)

A Moby Dick for the Reagan era.

After a quarter-century of charting every human degradation, here was a song to silence those who believed Lou Reed amoral. To a measured strum, the singer introduces our half-mile-long cetacean metaphor, then tells how the beast causes a tidal wave, killing all nearby but a Native American chief incarcerated for shooting a mayor's racist son (hurrah!), only then to be harpooned by an NRA "yokel" (boo!). Reed's ensuing summation of America's mistreatment of its natural wonders and indigenous tribes is swingeing. *AP*

VS-5046
STEREO
WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

Black mirror: The Velvet Underground look on the bright side (from left) Lou Reed, Sterling Morrison, John Cale, Moe Tucker, 1968.

JIM WIRTH UNDERGOES THE VU'S CRO-MAGNON INITIATION RITE

41

SISTER RAY

(from *White Light/White Heat*, 1968)

Having grumbled about excessive volume throughout the recording of *White Light/White Heat*, engineer Gary Kellgren's patience snapped as The Velvet Underground prepared to make up for a shortage of material by laying down an open-ended jam with no bass underpinning. "I don't have to listen to this," he told Lou Reed as he reached for the tape machine. "I'll put it in 'record', and then I'm leaving. When you're done, come get me." Thus, Kellgren opted out of 17 of the most extreme minutes of The Velvet Underground's recording career. As Reed Dylanises about struggling to find a vein to inject into ("I'm searching for my mainline/I said I couldn't hit it sideways"), the band turns all of the dials into the red.

Conceived by Reed on the way home from a disappointing show in Connecticut, his Alphabet City take on Hieronymus Bosch hinges around a transvestite smack dealer (named in honour of sexually ambiguous Kinks frontman Ray Davies) and a bloody murder that everyone is too strung out to notice. As he explained: "The situation is a bunch of drag queens taking some sailors home with them, shooting up on smack and having this orgy when the police appear."

Distracted producer Tom Wilson neglected to turn on some microphones around Moe Tucker's kit on this one-take wonder, but the muffled, wet thud she pounds out is as essential to the magical racket as the squalls and chatters of John Cale's distorted Vox organ. The fuzz cloud masks subtle shifts: Cale's Hell's-harpsichord section five minutes in; Reed's barely-in-tune guitar breaks and extended spells of metal-on-metal noise. Leaning into that Cro-Magnon rhythm, they contrive to reconcile Theatre Of Eternal Music minimalism and untethered Ornette Coleman jazz.

Melody Maker's contemporary reviewer doubtless had Sister Ray in mind when they wrote off *White Light/White Heat* as "utterly pretentious, unbelievably monotonous", but it caught the imagination of the next generations of misfits. New York noiseniks Suicide covered Sister Ray, The Modern Lovers and The Fall cribbed their entire early sound from it, and by the time Joy Division played a live version at London's Moonlight Club in April 1980 – included on their posthumous *Still* LP – it was a byword for speed-head nihilism, the Dark Star of the damned.

WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

> **"A BYWORD FOR SPEED-HEAD NIHILISM, THE DARK STAR OF THE DAMNED."**

However, the posthumous myth undersells its serious purpose. As contemporaries touted back-to-the-garden innocence, Sister Ray delivered ding-dong sucking, Last Exit To Brooklyn-ultra experience. "I didn't like that love-peace shit," Tucker said later, and here The Velvet Underground's snarky Factory-fodder disdain for musical and social convention – flower-powered or otherwise – is taken to its filth-hound extreme. As Kellgren perhaps intuited as he walked out of the studio, it's a challenge, an ordeal, an initiation rite. Take it or leave.

40 KICKS

(from *Coney Island Baby*, 1976)

Graphic horror meets cocktail party, all so oddly… pleasant.

The showbiz party chatter that burbles beneath this marvellously slinky tune about, it would appear, casual murder ("Yeah, yeah, kill him now/'Cos I need kicks/I'm getting bored") is its most unforgettable aspect. Of Kicks' audio verité, Reed told me, "These people thought they were smart, and I said, 'Oh, let me tape this,' and they said 'Oh, sure'… I faded it as it got libellous." The combination of utter inanity laid atop Reed singing about blood coming down someone's chest being "way better than sex" feels like a foreshadowing of American Psycho. *DD*

39 POWER AND GLORY (THE SITUATION)

(from *Magic And Loss*, 1992)

Touched by the hand of God: a singer filled with visions.

LOU REED
MAGIC AND LOSS

Exploring the magic of its parent album's title, Power And Glory saw Reed experiencing some kind of religious epiphany and being "seized by divinity's hot breath". This served as the introduction to a series of fantastical, quasi-Biblical images (one man shapeshifting into a bird, another into a tiger) while Reed marvelled at it all and hungered for more, as aided by the otherworldly interjections of Jimmy Scott ("I want all of it!") and the downtempo rock verses bursting into Stonesy swagger. *TD*

38 I HEARD HER CALL MY NAME

(From *White Light/White Heat*, 1968)

The VU's electric shocker has a story to tell.

At this song's midpoint, against an accelerated I'm Waiting For The Man chug, Lou hollers: "And then my mind split open!" For the remaining 140 seconds, his wildly foregrounded guitar – the true narrator here – virtually beats the song to death via a series of atonal fretboard flurries, bent Chuck Berry chords and assorted sonic convulsions, before expiring in a squall of feedback. Unprecedented then, still unequalled now, this ECT-charged masterpiece of disorientation, innovation and exhilaration feels as close to autobiography as anything in Reed's canon. *MP*

37 WAVES OF FEAR

(from *The Blue Mask*, 1982)

The addict's small hours panic attack as Rock Guignol.

LOU REED
The Blue Mask

The recently murdered fellow NYC resident John Lennon was on Reed's mind when making *The Blue Mask*. He'd loved Mother, and on 1983's Rooftop Garden would quote I Am The Walrus. How could Waves Of Fear's scouring drums, bass and *schreck*-guitar account of alcohol and drugs withdrawal not be inspired by Cold Turkey? While Robert Quine's angle-grinding axe matches the Plastic Ono Band's moonlighting Eric Clapton for horripilation, Reed roils in self-disgust and relishes the agony, as ever both villain and victim. *MS*

Getty, Mick Rock

"We Had A Ball With That"

Lou Reed, Record Producer? NELSON SLATER's *Wild Angel* revealed another side of rock's Mr Grumpy.

If there is one truly unsung gem in Lou Reed's *oeuvre*, it may reside on *Wild Angel*, recorded by Reed's Syracuse college pal Nelson Slater, produced by Reed himself, and released by RCA in 1976. Decorated with a cover design and Mick Rock photo that announced something sick'n'sleazy inside – which this really wasn't – the album featured Reed and his *Coney Island Baby*-era band providing a sympathetic backing to Slater's disarmingly subtle songwriting.

"Ahh," Reed told your writer in 1980. "I loved it, I really loved it. Given the time and the money that we had, there are a couple of songs on there…"

Mainly, he was talking about We, the six-minute track buried on the album's second side that features Reed as player, arranger, backing vocalist and surprisingly adept craftsman.

"That was an experiment that worked," Reed recalled. "In the mix every three seconds, we would fade something out – not fade it out, *click* it out, and put something else in. All through the record there's three things that are always there – the hi-hat, his voice and the bass. Then everything else – the two guitars, the piano, the rest of the drums, come in and out. And with that incredibly long classic Phil Spector paradiddle that introduces the whole thing – as it ended we went *whoom* and hit all the buttons. You can't imagine what it was like to see the speakers.

"We had a ball with that," Reed told me that day. "That was one of the best things I've ever done, Nelson's thing."

He paused, then reflexively responded: "I think we sold *six* copies."

As told to Dave DiMartino

wild angel NELSON SLATER

36 SAD SONG

(from *Berlin*, 1973)

Exactly what it says on the tin.

Despite its title, Sad Song provides an almost hopeful epilogue when considering the catalogue of misery that precedes it on *Berlin*. The violent misogyny of the line "somebody else would have broken both her arms" remains chilling, but Reed's voice croaks with remorse and loss – the album's grim mask of two doomed lovers slipping to reveal his heartbreak at the disintegration of his own marriage as Bob Ezrin's almost Disney-esque arrangement flowers around him like the first shoots of spring. *CC*

35 SALLY CAN'T DANCE

(from *Sally Can't Dance*, 1974)

The end of all tomorrow's parties.

LOU REED
SALLY CAN'T DANCE

Like NYC's street snapper WeeGee with a guitar, Reed frames the tragic descent of a New York It Girl (*à la* Edie Sedgwick) with an unflinching eye – from uptown glam to "the trunk of a Ford" in a few clicks. The peppy reggae-funk setting makes the tale feel even nastier, with a push-puppet bass line continually slapped down by raw-toothed chords. A chilly addendum to Walk On The Wild Side, it's Reed reminding us that many don't "get off the floor". *BdM*

34 SEE THAT MY GRAVE IS KEPT CLEAN

(from *The Harry Smith Project*, 2006)

Lou's blues square up to mortality.

In 1999, Reed dubbed Harry Smith's canon-shaping *Anthology Of American Folk Music* the sixth-best album ever. Two years later, for Hal Willner's attempt to resurrect its riches on-stage, Reed roamed and rampaged inside Blind Lemon Jefferson's famous blues, archived 50 years earlier by Smith. Reed bleeds outside of the swinging rhythm, modal solos chasing the riff's tale like an irascible raga. "Lord, it's two white horses – in line," he sings, stern voice suddenly catching, knowing full well this earnest old plea won't forestall the inevitable. *GHC*

33 I'LL BE YOUR MIRROR

(from *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, 1967)

A self-esteem song for Nico.

Written by Reed to make the icy but insecure German model he was forced to share the mike with feel better about herself, here is the VU at their most direct, emotionally and lyrically. Chiming electric guitar, a touch of bass from Sterling Morrison and a loose rhythm from Moe Tucker's tambourine all complement Nico's tender vocal, getting the right take of which drove her to tears in the studio. Andy Warhol wanted a built-in scratch on the vinyl so the title line sung at the end would repeat for ever. *WH*

32 ROMEO HAD JULIETTE

(from *New York*, 1989)

Love among the garbage: a rose by another name.

The opening track of Reed's fifteenth solo album is a love story as grimy, grandiose and fucked-up as the city it's set in. His contemporary take on Shakespeare's play is dense with words – urban poetry he narrates as much as sings over a catchy rock melody and dirty-sweet guitar. There's an early Dylan quality – and quantity – to the lyrics. In the great melting pot of NYC, the star-crossed lovers share the stage with everyone from crack dealers to Christopher Columbus, Jesus to a dead cop. *SS*

“Room service?”: Lou Reed in Blakes Hotel, London, 1975.

REED’S MOST ROMANTIC SONG, EULOGISED BY ANDREW MALE

31

CONEY ISLAND BABY

(from *Coney Island Baby*, 1975)

In the late summer of 1975, Lou Reed was still coming to terms with the fall-out from his fifth studio LP, the four-sided assault of modulated feedback known as *Metal Machine Music*. Close to broke, without a home or a manager, and with a record label no longer interested in his nihilistic output, Reed threw himself upon the mercy of RCA and agreed to work on an openly commercial release. Collaborating with young producer Godfrey Diamond, and inspired by his relationship with trans girlfriend Rachel Humphreys, Reed crafted an album caught midway between a speed psychosis comedown and lush teen nostalgia, a record that culminated in one of the most romantic songs he ever composed.

Repurposing his own 1971 poem The Coach And Glory Of Love (originally written for The Harvard Advocate), his words delivered in a conversational murmur, the song gradually evolves from an oddly sensual ode to a high school football coach into a late-night soul-baring hymn to “the glory of love”. Reed sings with a hesitant intensity, forever on the edge of losing it, occasionally slipping back into trademark alienation (“And you’re getting to hate/Just about everything”). As such, it’s a song on the point of collapse, its meandering advance constantly in danger of being subsumed by rank disgust (“Ah, but remember that the city is… something like a circus or a sewer”). What saves it is the weeping Floydian guitar of Bob Kulick and the doo-wop backing vocals of Diamond, Joanne Vent and Michael Wendroff, both somehow seeming to evoke the glory of love that the burnt-out singer can’t quite articulate himself.

Gradually, however, Reed gropes towards a kind of homesick epiphany, where he remembers, “The princess who lived on the hill/Who loved you even though she knew you was wrong.” Whether that princess is Rachel Humphreys, or someone else from Reed’s past, doesn’t matter; without Rachel it’s hard to imagine Reed being together enough to memorialise this moment of revelation.

By the end, Reed seems to believe enough in what he’s singing about to rephrase the “glory of love” mantra as a slurred maxim (“The glory of love might see you through”) and you realise that you’ve been witness to the birth of a pop song. If you were in any doubt, Reed then quotes the 1962 doo-wop hit Coney Island Baby by Bronx harmony sextet The Excellents, and adopts the guise of an AM radio DJ “sending this one out to Lou and Rachel and all the kids at P.S. 192.”

What is P.S. 192? It’s the Magnet School in Brooklyn, the kindergarten Reed attended before his family moved to the Long Island suburbs. Finally, it all makes sense. Lou is singing a song of romantic hope to his lost childhood self, a song he knows the kid will never hear.

CONEY ISLAND BABY
Lou Reed

> “REED SINGS WITH A HESITANT INTENSITY, FOREVER ON THE EDGE OF LOSING IT.”

30

I'M STICKING WITH YOU

(from *VU*, 1985)

You can't see the join: a tender duet with Moe Tucker.

Recorded in May '69 for the proposed fourth LP but not released until the '80s, this delightful Tucker/Reed duet comes in three distinctly eccentric parts. The verses are a waltz-time nursery rhyme of solo Moe – slightly off-key with sweet, wobbly piano – before Lou crashes into the bridge with a cartoon baritone and a change of key. The dynamic shifts again as the band come in for a gently ecstatic coda. The lyrics walk the same line between deceptively simple and baffling. *JB*

29

NOBODY BUT YOU

(From *Songs For Drella*, 1990)

Lou as Andy as Narcissus talking to his own reflection.

The live performances, with John Cale present, don't quite work, as this stripped-bare song of loneliness and self-regard, in which Reed imagines himself as Andy Warhol attacking his own nullity, needs to sound like an act of solo creation in an empty room. The album version, just vocals echoing guitar and bass, Cale a ghostly keyboard presence, is perfect. Reed moves through different iterations of Warhol as "nobody": unique, worthless, invisible, dead. It's Warhol ready to depart the corporeal and exist purely as ghost, dream, concept, idea. *AM*

28

I FOUND A REASON

(from *Loaded*, 1970)

A love letter to doo-wop with a troubling undertone.

Transformed from its upbeat Byrds-do-Dylan demo version into a muted ballad of devotion, I Found A Reason seemed on the surface designed to fulfil Atlantic Records' desire for The VU to have hits. Yet, darkness inevitably lurks: the object of Lou's affections has given him a reason to *live*. Elsewhere, the assertion, "Oh, I do believe/If you don't like things you leave" foreshadows his resignation from the band. Subsequently covered by artists as diverse as Cat Power and Phish, making it something of a modern standard. *TD*

27

I LOVE YOU, SUZANNE

(from *New Sensations*, 1984)

Ice-Lou thaws, buys you a regular-guy beer.

LOU REED NEW SENSATIONS

"Springsteen… I think he's groovy," quoth Lou on '78's wisecracking *Live: Take No Prisoners*. This UK Number 78 found him going for a blue-collar pop mainline too: over a juvenile boogie-riff and thwacky '80s drums, its glad, singalong devotion is dopey but sincere, and of all the ways he messed with his audience's heads, his bum-shaking, somersaults and twirls on the cornball-but-cute video deserve ultimate respect. See also an '86 version live at the NY Ritz, where saxman Rick Bell achieves full Clarence Clemons-ness. Groovy is right. *IH*

Alamy, Getty

"Lou Said, 'I Found Lou Reed Again!'"

FRED MAHER remembers *New York*: "Lou was on his best behaviour…"

I'd drummed on *Legendary Hearts* and *New Sensations* and toured with Lou before joining Scritti Politti. Lou later asked if I'd play on what became *New York*. He was also looking for producers, but nothing materialised and, full of myself, I offered to do it. Lou said, "What do you know about producing rock, after working on that synth crap?" I convinced him to record one song to see how it went. He was very into guitar sounds, so I suggested we start there and build the sound around guitar and Lou's voice, noting how previous producers had directed him to sing out, as opposed to his spoken-word style. The result was Romeo Had Juliette, exactly as you hear it on the record. Lou called me after, and said, "I found Lou Reed again."

The recording was shockingly smooth; Lou was on his best behaviour throughout. We recorded the guitars first, and I played drums after and for some crazy reason it worked, even on Dirty Blvd, which was very tight with subtle changes in tempo, but it just flowed easily.

A lot of the lyrics were angry but he wasn't a method-actor type of person, he was a sardonic kind of guy and didn't need to get worked up to get into the character of the song. Lou had Moe Tucker play on Last Great American Whale and Dime Store Mystery; he never said why. Lou also tried to get Cale involved, but when I told John that Moe was playing, he said, "What is this, some kind of fucking Velvet Underground reunion?" It never happened.

As told to Martin Aston

26

JESUS

(from *The Velvet Underground, 45th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition*, 2014)

The best reason for going *back* in the closet…

Lou Reed's so-called 'closet mix' of this achingly sparse appeal to a higher power – the version on the first press of the 1969 vinyl appended to the 2014 box set – is the more skeletal, Reed and Doug Yule walking on two sets of eggshells with a crystalline guitar wavering like the narrator's commitment to the righteous path, its yearning for transcendence the polar flipside of the Velvets as nihilist assault group. The difference a closet makes is even more marked on Some Kinda Love. *DE*

25

MAGIC AND LOSS (THE SUMMATION)

(from *Magic And Loss*, 1992)

A practical incantation for the artist in middle-age.

Conceived as an investigation of magic, transmogrified by the losses of his songwriting mentor Doc Pomus and Factory alum Rotten Rita, Reed's sixteenth solo album achieves equilibrium in the concluding title track. A Zen koan of forbearance, it finds Reed sombrely working through grief, self-loathing, arrogance, rage – plenty of signature moves – to reach a place of acceptance, and even humility. "You can't be Shakespeare and you can't be Joyce," he acknowledges, "so what is left instead?" Being Lou Reed, one could conclude; decent consolation. *JM*

24

WHO LOVES THE SUN

(from *Loaded*, 1970)

Swaps glower power for flower power, for once.

Prior to the release of their final album, Atlantic had impressed on The Velvet Underground the need for an album "loaded" with hits. OK, you can practically hear Reed say on Who Loves The Sun, you got it. Flexing his pre-Velvets chops as a songwriter-for-hire at Pickwick bashing out soundalike versions of the hits of the day, Reed delivers a flawless take on West Coast hippy pop, complete with Mamas & The Papas-style "ba-ba-ba-baaa" backing vocals and a puppy dog-eyed vocal from bassist Doug Yule. That it actually bombed when released as a single takes nothing away from its simple pop perfection. *CC*

23

KILL YOUR SONS

(from *Sally Can't Dance*, 1974)

The lowlife observer examines his own experiences in psychiatric institutions.

Reed was 10 years in the game before he finally tackled his own teenage trauma – in summer '59, his parents had him committed to 'treat' his bisexuality and depression. Over Mogadon rhythm and guitarist Danny Weis's surreal shredding, he chillingly revealed how Electro-Convulsive Therapy robbed him of the ability to read books. Satirising his family's dysfunction, Reed's simplistic language in describing his sister's husband ("he's big and fat, he doesn't have a brain") and intravenous Thorazine was disarmingly comic, pretty much inventing the Ramones. *AP*

22

OCEAN

(from *1969: Velvet Underground Live With Lou Reed*, 1974)

Foamy freak-out captured live in San Francisco.

Reed recorded at least four lyrical variants of this hypnotic gem. On the sleepy *Loaded* out-take, someone called Malcolm has cursed Lou's family. In the bizarre version closing Reed's solo debut, Malcolm lives in Lou's head and serves him bread. But Malcolm's absent from the churning 11-minute take on *Live 1969*, with its air of sweet resignation as the band sings "Here comes the waves" as a smacked-up shanty, before sailing away on a long, long Doug Yule organ solo. *JI*

Continues on page 74

Street level: Reed in electric warrior pose, 1989.

KEITH CAMERON HAILS REED'S RETURN TO THE WILD SIDE

21

DIRTY BLVD

(from *New York*, 1989)

Although still synonymous with the urban sphere, little in Lou Reed's spotty '80s output suggested he'd end the decade issuing a long, densely worded polemic on the dire state of his city, and built from the same musical bedrock on which his legend resided. Yet like others of his generation, Reed had finally noted the cultural barometer's return to rock'n'roll fundamentals. On *New York*'s sleevenote, he thanked "everyone who helped me with the guitars, the pick-ups, the speakers, the cabinets and the amplifiers that power it all." Each watt counted: *New York* packed a heavy weight. And no song hit harder than Dirty Blvd.

In language as blunt as his bare bones combo's playing, with every mention of the title a cue for the vengeful slash of the core riff, each syllable fulfils its author's lofty aspirations. Verse four paraphrased Emma Lazarus's poem The New Colossus, written in 1883 to raise money for the Statue of Liberty's construction. While Lazarus evoked a utopian embrace to the immigrant "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" who would be greeted upon arrival in New York by the torch-bearing "Mother of Exiles", the reality observed by Reed a hundred years later was very different: "'Give me your hungry, your tired, your poor, I'll piss on 'em'/That's what the statue of bigotry says."

LOU REED
NEW YORK

> "REED HAD NOTED THE CULTURAL BAROMETER'S RETURN TO ROCK'N'ROLL FUNDAMENTALS."

Reed's tone was studiedly neutral, like a war correspondent amid the spartan clank of electrified metal, relating the abject story of a Hispanic kid forced to hustle by a father who "beats him 'cos he's too tired to beg". Pedro and nine siblings live in the Wilshire, a welfare hotel on West 58th Street ("This room costs two thousand dollars a month… Somewhere a landlord's laughing 'til he wets his pants") not far from the Lincoln Center, New York's elite art nexus, with its operas, movie stars, limos and lights – "but the lights are out on the mean streets". Twenty blocks downtown at the Lincoln Tunnel, meanwhile, "a small kid is selling roses for a buck".

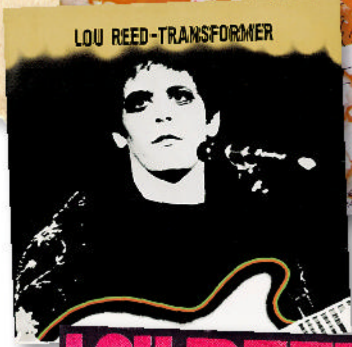
In a poignant final benediction, Reed's hero Dion DiMucci makes a cameo appearance, serenading Pedro's dreams of flying away. As the preceding three minutes have made clear, "slim chance" dreams are pretty much all the boy has. Now drug-free and living comfortably in either his Upper West Side apartment or a New Jersey farmhouse, Reed was no longer so intimately connected to Pedro's world. Yet if there had often been an ambivalence to his observations of New York's downtrodden, Dirty Blvd seethed with empathy for those on the wrong side of America's race and class divides. "You can't beat 2 guitars, bass, drum," said Lou's sleevenote. When allied to such raw moral indignation, it's hard to argue.

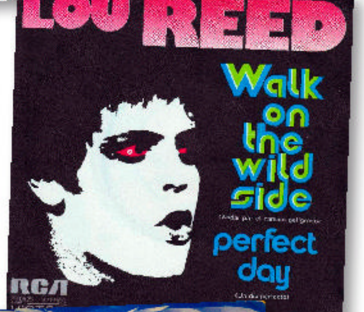
“THIS IS GOING TO DESTROY THEM!”

LOU REED KNEW THAT *BERLIN*’S CINEMATIC PORTRAIT OF FUCKED-UP LOVERS MIRED IN DRUGS AND VIOLENCE WOULD CHALLENGE FANS OF HIS CAREER-MAKING *TRANSFORMER*. FIFTY YEARS ON, IT’S TIME TO COUNT ITS TRUE COST, AND MEASURE ITS TRUE GENIUS. “IT WAS A ROCK TRAGEDY,” LEARNS DAVID FRICKE. “BUT IN THE EARLY ’70S, NOBODY GAVE A SHIT ABOUT A ROCK TRAGEDY.”

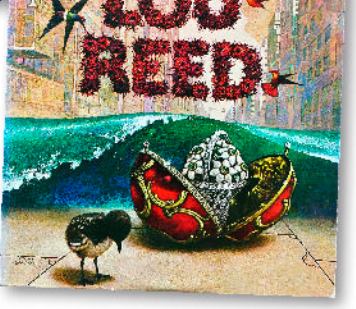
PICTURE BY GUS STEWART.

LOU REED
BERLIN





Detroit
ROCK 'N ROLL
BOX OF OLD ROSES



ON APRIL 9, 1973, CANADIAN record producer Bob Ezrin went to Toronto’s Massey Hall to see Lou Reed in concert. Just turned 24, Ezrin was on a two-year hot streak of gold albums and smash 45s with the Gothic-garage band Alice Cooper. Reed, 31, was on his own improbable roll. Three years earlier, frustrated by a relentless lack of success, Reed walked out on The Velvet Underground – right after a show at Max’s Kansas City – into self-imposed exile at his childhood home on Long Island.

But when Ezrin saw him in Toronto, Reed was in glam-rock clover, the overdue breakout star of that spangled-boogie year. The poet laureate of Manhattan’s *demi-monde*, at once frank and empathic, with an acidic monotone that could make Bob Dylan sound like a crooner, Reed was in the American Top 30 with his second solo album, *Transformer* – co-produced by his most famous fan, David Bowie – and all over AM radio with Walk On The Wild Side, a wickedly affectionate parade of the sexual rascals and emotionally scarred outcasts attached to the pop artist and former Velvets manager Andy Warhol.

Fifty years later, Ezrin confesses that he went to Massey Hall “really to see the opening act”, Genesis, then on their first North American tour. “I was excited about Lou, but fascinated by Peter Gabriel.” (In 1977, Ezrin produced the Genesis singer’s debut as a solo artist.) Reed, in turn, was determined to meet Ezrin after hearing his work on a 1972 cover of the Velvets song Rock & Roll by Detroit, a hard rock band fronted by Michigan white-soul singer Mitch Ryder.

“Lou heard it by accident in the background of a radio commercial for drag racing on Long Island,” says guitarist Steve Hunter, who played the stomping riff on the Detroit record. “Lou did some research and told somebody he wanted Bob and me for his next album.”

After the concert, Reed and Ezrin adjourned to the producer’s Toronto home. “He was tired but wired,” Ezrin recalls. “We talked about *Transformer*, how he felt trapped by its success” – especially the implication that Reed was a creature of Bowie’s patronage. “He felt pushed into a role he didn’t want to play.” Instead, Reed wanted to make “the anti-*Transformer*.”

Reed played some new music that night on acoustic guitar – “disconnected material,” Ezrin says, “some of which was pretty good.” But the producer was more interested in a song from the singer’s first solo effort, 1972’s *Lou Reed*: Berlin, a sumptuously arranged snapshot of a romantic couple in a café “by the wall… Candlelight and Dubonnet on ice.”

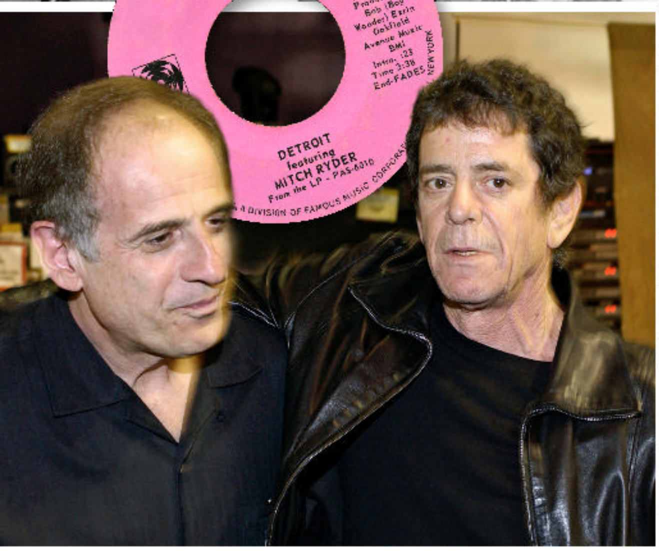
“There’s a device in films and literature,” Ezrin explains, “where you take a small thing, describe it exquisitely, and that defines the story, like the baby carriage going down the steps in Battleship Potemkin. Lou’s a master of that. He can tell you a life in two-and-a-half minutes.”

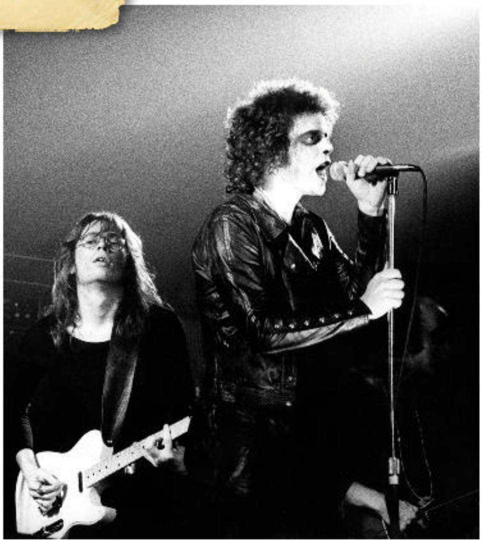
Ezrin wanted to know more about the people in Berlin: what happened next?

“Lou said, ‘Give me a couple of weeks,’” he recalls. “Boom, he was out the door.” ➤

Gus Stewart

This is how it feels: Lou Reed transforms on-stage in 1973.


ROCK 'N ROLL
(Lou Reed)
PROMOTIONAL COPY NOT FOR SALE
PAA-0133
MB 26337-S
Produced by Bob (Boy Wonder) Ezrin
Oakfield Avenue Music BMI
Intro. :23
Time 3:38
End-FADES
NEW YORK
DETROIT
featuring
MITCH RYDER
From the LP - PAS-6010
A DIVISION OF FAMOUS MUSIC CORPORATION



A hustle here, a hustle there: (clockwise from top left) Detroit with Mitch Ryder, 1972; Reed with soon-to-be wife Bettye Kronstad, January 27, 1973; Reed with Iggy Pop and Warhol star Jackie Curtis in the back room at Max's Kansas City, New York, 1973; on-stage with *Berlin* guitarist Steve Hunter, Amsterdam, 1973; a Max's scene with (from left) club owner Mickey Ruskin, Reed, Iggy Pop and (foreground) Alice Cooper; Reed with *Berlin* producer Bob Ezrin, 2003; Reed with Mick Jagger and David Bowie, London, 1973.

Photos by Danny Fields, © Gillian McCain (2), Leni Sinclair, Courtesy Bettye Kronstad, Getty (3)

> "*BERLIN* HAS GOT THIS RAP THAT IT'S DEPRESSING. ARE YOU JOKING? YOU CAN'T HANDLE IT? YOU EVER READ HAMLET?"
> LOU REED

REED CAME BACK WITH A CYCLE OF SONGS that followed the lovers in Berlin, now named Caroline and Jim, into a rapidly deteriorating marriage, long nights on speed and a hatred so fierce it turns into physical abuse. The abandonment, crippling loneliness and – spoiler alert – Caroline's suicide were rendered in spectral melodies, Reed's dry, haunted singing and unforgiving lyric detail.

It was "genius," Ezrin contends. "Lou sat on the floor, playing Caroline Says and The Kids" – the latter a cold indictment of the reckless adultery that leads to Caroline's forced separation from her children. "I knew the album was a movie," Ezrin says. "I didn't know how big a movie it was going to be."

The record Reed and Ezrin inevitably titled *Berlin* would be audio cinema on a cathedral-like scale with brass, strings and choir, made over the summer of 1973 at London's Morgan Studios and the Record Plant in New York with an expensive army of rock sidemen who were stars in their own right. In London, Steve Hunter was awestruck to be in the same room as ex-Cream bassist Jack Bruce, Traffic's Steve Winwood and Frank Zappa drummer Aynsley Dunbar.

"I'd sit down, get my guitar tuned, look up and here's Jack Bruce," Hunter marvels. "Another day, Steve is on the Hammond B-3 doing that cool Steve Winwood shit."

The narrative shock of *Berlin* descended from Reed's uncompromising accounts of addiction, depravity and despair for The Velvet Underground, directly so in some instances. In addition to reprising Berlin (only the first verse), he recycled the title from a 1965 demo, Men Of Good Fortune, and drew from his unreleased stash of writing for the VU, as he had on *Lou Reed* and *Transformer*. Caroline Says I and II were accusing, explicitly brutal sisters to Stephanie Says, a 1968 VU outtake. And Reed adapted Sad Song and Oh Jim from Velvets demos (the latter as Oh Gin) for 1970's *Loaded* – to a darker, confrontational extreme.

"This is going to destroy them," Reed boasted to Rolling Stone in a report on the album sessions that told readers to expect "the *Sgt. Pepper* of the '70s" – "them" being the glitter kids who only knew him from *Transformer*. "This is going to show them I'm not kidding," he added. "It's very real – very, very real. It's kinda unpleasant to listen to, but it's safe.

"It's just a realistic story," he insisted, "about people who live in the '70s, who exist… not only in Berlin but in places like Ohio."

Of course, Reed noted, after *Berlin* came out, in an interview with the rock magazine Circus, "If you said Scarsdale [a New York suburb], people would say, 'Scarsdale? I don't want to hear a record about Scarsdale.' As it turned out, they don't want to hear a record about Berlin either."

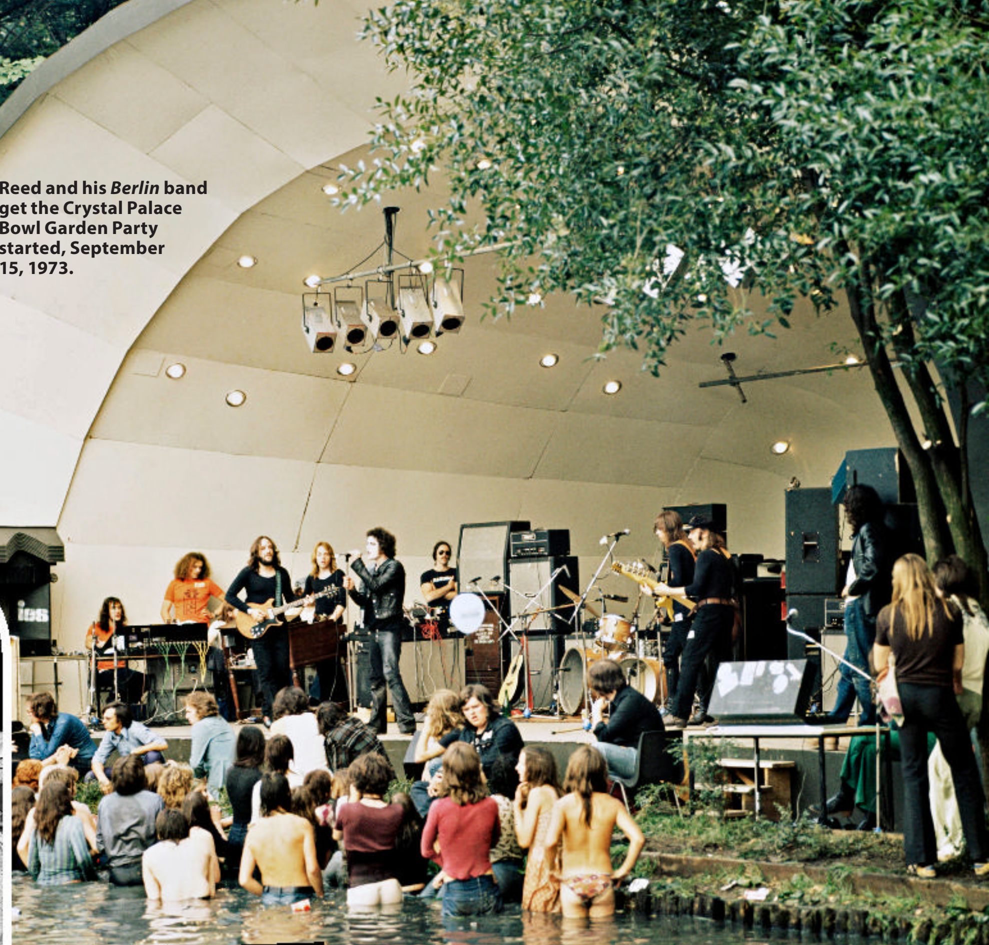
"But you like the album, don't you?' the reporter asked.

"Like is not the right word," Reed replied.

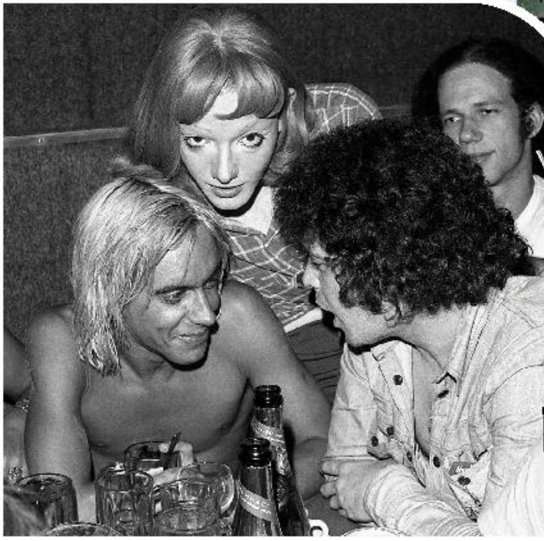
BERLIN ENDED REED'S POP-STAR HONEYMOON with a vengeance. Released in the US on October 5, 1973, six months after Walk On The Wild Side peaked at Number 16 on Billboard's Hot 100, the album entered the chart on October 20 – and stopped dead at Number 98. *Berlin* got into the British Top 10, riding in *Transformer*'s slipstream. But in America, it was as if Reed's year in the mainstream had never happened.

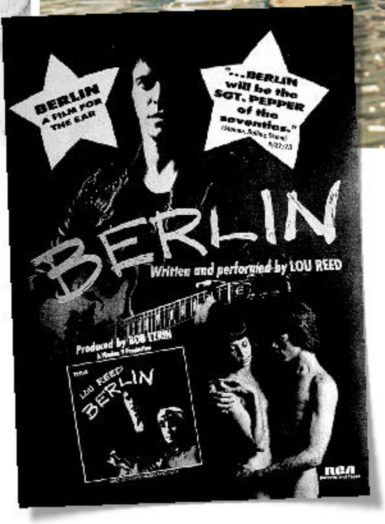
Reviews were even worse – puzzled at best; generally savage, even mocking. Berlin was "so slow moving, so dull at times," one critic yawned, "that one begins to wish to die of old age before an entire side is finished." In Rolling Stone, Stephen Davis denounced the album as "a disaster" and "patently offensive," declaring the end of "a once-promising career" with the kiss-off, "Goodbye, Lou."

It was a premature epitaph. "Lou's neuroses are abundant, and



Reed and his *Berlin* band get the Crystal Palace Bowl Garden Party started, September 15, 1973.




BERLIN
A FILM FOR THE EAR
"...BERLIN will be the SGT. PEPPER of the seventies."
BERLIN
Written and performed by LOU REED
Produced by BOB EZRIN
LOU REED BERLIN
RCA

that's what he thrives on," New York Dolls singer David Johansen said of *Berlin* in a December, 1973 interview. "He's not trying to turn on a rock'n'roll audience with this record… It's very vindictive, very moralistic… I hope he gets away with it." A decade later, in 1985, New Musical Express included it in a list of the best albums ever made. And in 2003, Rolling Stone – in a complete U-turn – did the same.

Reed never forgot or forgave the initial reception. "*Berlin* has got this rap that it's depressing," he snapped at Spin in 2008. "Are you joking? You can't handle it? You ever read Hamlet?" The singer delivered his own summary judgment of rock writers on the 1978 live album, *Take No Prisoners*: "Fuck you. I don't need you to tell me I'm good."

The *Berlin* pans "hurt my feelings as if it were my album," Hunter says. "I couldn't understand why they didn't get it: are they that dense? Here is an album that talks about the tragedy of drugs and the lives involved so deeply in it. It was a rock tragedy. But in the early '70s, nobody gave a shit about a rock tragedy. Everybody was partying their asses off."

Publicly, Reed was honest about the trauma of building *Berlin* – up to a point. "It was painful," he confided at the time. "It caused a lot of mental and emotional difficulties with the people that were involved with it. You can't just push your mind into that kind of area and wander around unscathed."

He rarely spoke, however, about how close his writing was to his personal life: the heavy drinking, hard-drug use and Reed's marriage to his first wife, Bettye Kronstad. "It's interesting how little there is of *Berlin* in terms of song demos or acoustic work tapes," says Don Fleming, a co-producer of historical Reed albums who has been a curator for the Reed archive now held at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. "It was kind of a writer's block" after *Transformer*, Fleming suggests, "with the enormous pressure at that point." Reed "didn't have the new record, so he had to come up with most of it very quickly" – overnight, according to Kronstad in her 2016 memoir, Perfect Day: An Intimate Portrait Of Life With Lou Reed.

"I'd been through this before with Lou," wrote Kronstad, an actress and student at Columbia University when she met Reed in 1968, marrying the singer in February, 1973 as *Transformer* took him into hyperdrive. "It is how he wrote his other albums… all at once, piecing together old material with new songs."

When Reed first played the *Berlin* songs for her on guitar, Kronstad was "stunned" by references in How Do You Think It Feels and Caroline Says II to stormy events from their relationship. "I also realised there was a narrative going on… he was only taking real-life moments and adding them to his story to give it an immediate sense of reality."

That was until Kronstad heard The Kids. Reed had a blueprint of the song in 1971, performing it on a tape made at one of the rock salons hosted by producer Richard Robinson (soon to work on *Lou Reed*) and his wife, journalist Lisa Robinson. But for *Berlin*, Reed used a harrowing piece of Kronstad's childhood: her parents' break-up and the day she was taken, at age five, from her mother in a bitter custody battle. Reed's defence, according to Kronstad in her book: "Look, it's just what came last… I just wrote it down… No one will know." Her response: "*I will*." Kronstad accompanied Reed to London for the *Berlin* sessions; they were divorced before the year was over.

"I wasn't aware of what was going on with Bettye until we got to London," Ezrin says, pointing out that "discomfort was a big part of what we were supposed to be doing." *Berlin* was not "violence for violence's sake. Lou had come up with a language that was accurate and true to the real-life feelings that some people have. In some cases, that would lead to violence."

Hunter admits he "didn't know much about the lyrics" when ➢

“I SAID, EXCUSE ME. ARE YOU LOU REED?”

JONATHAN RICHMAN REMEMBERS HIS APPRENTICESHIP WITH LOU REED AND THE VELVET UNDERGROUND: “MY PARENTS, BLESS THEIR HEARTS, LET ME GO SEE THESE WEIRDOS.”

I, AS A SIXTEEN-year-old, was actually an upset high school student. I was walking around Harvard Square a few days before a Velvet Underground show at the Boston Tea Party, and a guy with a guitar case was walking through on that beautiful spring afternoon. And I said, “Excuse me. Are you Lou Reed?” And he says, “Yes.” I told him that his music meant so much to me, and he said, “Can I ask what you like about it?” And I said, “For one thing, you use the guitars as percussion instruments.” He says, “Really? You get that from it?” I said yes. And he said, “You mean use them as drums?” I said, “Yeah. In certain songs, yeah.”

I guess he liked what I said, so I was in. They let me show up early while the group was bringing in their stuff. And they were all nice to me. Lou Reed, after a while, would let me try out his electric guitars during their rehearsals and just listen to the sounds.

I had seen The Velvet Underground between 60 and a hundred times. And my parents, bless their hearts, let me go see these weirdos. And I explained who they were, and they knew who Andy Warhol was, but they trusted me. And they were right to, because I actually was what I said I was. As a painter, I heard their sound. And it wasn’t just the lyrics, although Lou Reed gave me my voice as a singer.

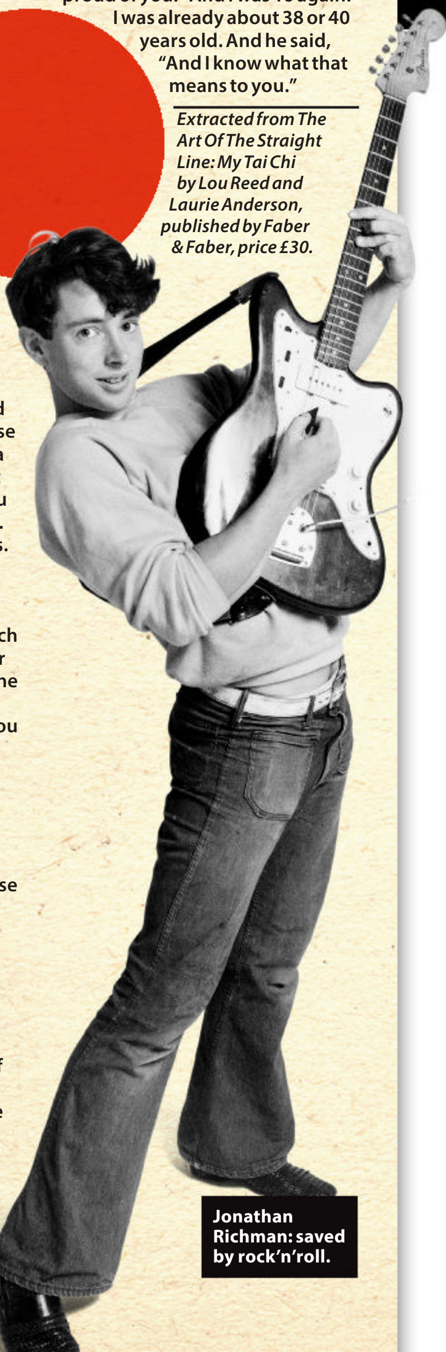
And, I would watch their hands. I would watch them play guitar during rehearsal. I’d watch them on-stage. I learned how to improvise from them. I would watch them make up songs… I Heard Her Call My Name, Beginning To See The Light, I’m Set Free, Jesus… I heard them work out these songs, and Lou Reed would put down one guitar and pick up a Fender 12-string for another. He’d let me play that Fender 12-string or something.

Around that time, I actually opened up for them at a place around Boston called the Woodrose Ballroom. After that, for no apparent reason, Lou cut me off. I offended him in some way that I didn’t know. Sterling Morrison would just say, “Oh, he’s like that.” I remember once it happened, he didn’t speak to me for years. And I got over it, and I just figured, OK. If I’m on my own, the heavens must want me to be on my own and take my own path. Lou and I would talk mystical stuff occasionally, and he would tell me about mystical books. I’d say, I wonder if he’s cutting me off for two reasons. One, because I’m obnoxious, and maybe also he might be trying to do me some favour. I’ll never know the answer.

So Lou was into meditation by that point. He in fact would go to these monthly meditations that the Alice Bailey people had at the United Nations. Lou Reed would tell me about the Alice Bailey Lucis Trust books. People who go to mystic bookstores will be familiar with books like A Treatise On White Magic and A Treatise On Cosmic Fire. He would talk to me about stuff like this. It’s also in some of his songs. Like, “Over the hill we go, and you’re looking for love,” [from New Age] the words like, “Insects are evil thoughts” [Ocean] – this is from that material. The idea of manifestations of certain thoughts being physically sometimes, in the animal kingdom, positive or negative. Lou was into stuff like that.

In 1992, I had a show in New York at the Lone Star Roadhouse, and Penn Jillette invited Lou to come to the show. After the show, Penn and Teller took about eight of us to a Midtown deli. Lou sat next to me and said, “You know, Jonathan, having seen you play tonight, I’m proud of you.” And I was 16 again. I was already about 38 or 40 years old. And he said, “And I know what that means to you.”

Extracted from The Art Of The Straight Line: My Tai Chi by Lou Reed and Laurie Anderson, published by Faber & Faber, price £30.



Jonathan Richman: saved by rock’n’roll.

A film for the ear: (from left) Reed, plus orchestra and choir, takes *Berlin* to London’s Hammersmith Apollo, June 30, 2007; Jack Richardson, Bob Ezrin’s production mentor, who mastered *Berlin*; “ecstatic” Reed playing *Berlin* at Zurich Hallenstadion, July 2, 2008.

< he played on *Berlin*. Yet he remembers the day Reed met Jack Bruce for the first time: “We were about to record Men Of Good Fortune. Jack said to Lou, ‘Can I see the lyrics?’ Lou thought that was really cool – that Jack didn’t want to play on the song until he knew the story.”

“BERLIN – A FILM FOR THE EAR,” REED’S RECORD company, RCA, announced in a press advertisement, done up like a 1940s movie poster with that Rolling Stone quote about *Sgt. Pepper* for good measure. A more accurate come-on would have been the one RCA used for a 1975 cash-in, *Lou Reed Live*: “Pervert your sense of decorum.”

But the label knew a lost cause when they heard it. First editions of *Berlin* on cassette and 8-track tape included a one-minute piano soliloquy by Allan Macmillan, a bridge from his extravagant soloing in Berlin, the album opener, to the next track, Lady Day. That piece, never on LP or CD, was part of the 14 minutes cut from *Berlin* after Reed and Ezrin delivered it to RCA.

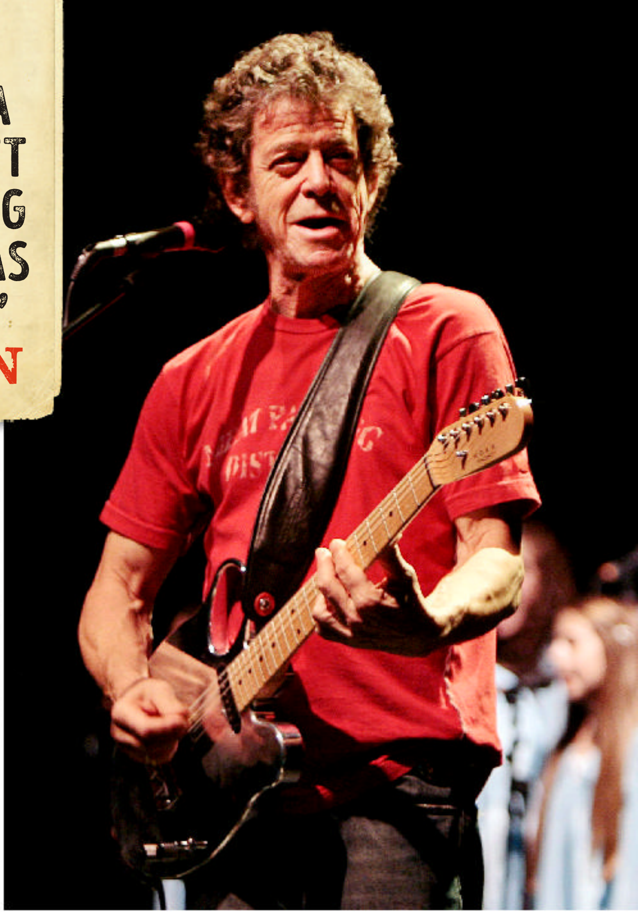
“We had longer endings and some songs tied together by an interim piece,” Ezrin explains. “We were always told that we could have a double album, so we made the right shape from our point of view of this story. Then we got told, ‘Nah, that’s not happening.’ What the fuck?”

Ezrin had that extravagance in his head from the start. In London, he played piano on the basic tracks, including the parts intended for the brass and strings so the studio band knew “what they were playing to.” For Reed’s vocals, largely done in New York, Ezrin created a physical setting evoking hermetic spaces and tensions, “little walls like he was in a cocoon. If we wanted strident, he had to stand up. For Caroline Says II or The Kids, I needed him to sit down, more contained.”

“Listening to this album is like taking a trip to Edge City,” a Crawdaddy writer said in one of the rare positive reviews of *Berlin*. The Kids was that sensation taken beyond the pale. To dramatise its terrible conceit, Ezrin recruited his sons David, 6, and Joshua, a toddler, to pretend they were locked out of the house, yelling for their mother. “I recorded it on a little Nagra [tape machine],” Ezrin says, “took it to the studio and distorted the shit out of it, turning the gain up until it got crunchier and more frightening.”

It worked too well. After a playback, he says, “People ran out of the control room.” A woman who worked for Reed at the time

“I KNEW THE ALBUM WAS A MOVIE. I DIDN’T KNOW HOW BIG A MOVIE IT WAS GOING TO BE.”
BOB EZRIN



KISS
MUSIC FROM
THE ELDER

had lost a child. “I didn’t know that. She just broke down in tears and ran out. She couldn’t stand it” – harsh proof, Ezrin acknowledges, that “it was working. Because it was meant to be that.”

Berlin “did not go without its effect on either Bobby or me,” Reed said later. By the time Ezrin chopped it to a single 50-minute LP – with help from producer Jack Richardson, a fellow Canadian – “Lou was hiding,” says Ezrin, who then left the mastering to Richardson “because I was falling apart,” wrestling with substance abuse and “stuff with my own marriage. Staying up way too late, doing drugs, being this intense emotionally all the time – it was relentless.”

Reed’s legendary, combative zigzag through the ’70s was only starting. Just ahead: the Top 10 shock of 1974’s sub-par *Sally Can’t Dance*; the 1975 feedback concerto *Metal Machine Music*, immediately followed by the bruised doo-wop yearning of *Coney Island Baby*; the swagger and noir of 1978’s *Street Hassle*. “It was insanity coming off a hit single,” Reed said of *Berlin*, talking to New Musical Express writer Nick Kent in 1974. But “if I hadn’t got it out of my head, I would have exploded.”

REED AND EZRIN NEVER MADE ANOTHER STUDIO album together, although they remained friends and collaborated in other ways. In 1983, working on a Nils Lofgren LP, Ezrin introduced Reed to the guitarist; the two got on so well they co-wrote three songs for the project. Reed also wrote with Kiss for their 1981 Ezrin-produced album, *Music From “The Elder”*.

One night in the early 2000s, Reed and Ezrin were dining in New York’s West Village when Reed’s friend, the artist Julian Schnabel, walked into the restaurant and came to their table. “Lou says, ‘This is Bob Ezrin,’” the producer recalls. Schnabel “got on his knees and said, ‘You have to do *Berlin* live. You guys don’t realise – I became an artist because of *Berlin*.’”

Reed had played songs from the album in concert over the years, as recently as the tour documented on 2004’s live LP, *Animal Serenade*. But he had never done the full record in sequence as, Ezrin claims, the two always intended: “We left dinner saying, ‘Yeah, we should do this.’”

On December 14, 2006, Reed opened a five-night stand at St Ann’s Warehouse, an intimate New York theatre, performing *Berlin* in its entirety for the first time. Ezrin arranged and conducted the king-size band including horns and strings; Hunter back on guitar; and the singers Sharon Jones and Anohni. Schnabel designed the stage set and directed a film of the shows. Reed’s producer and close friend Hal Willner was “a great set of eyes and ears,” Ezrin says, “for what was going on-stage, how things were working.”

“The most astonishing thing about hearing *Berlin* live was the greatest-hits glow of the songs,” I wrote in my Rolling Stone review of the first night. “The arrangements… bloomed in 3-D.” The audience response was so adoring that Reed took *Berlin* on the road in 2007 and 2008 – among his final tours before his death in October, 2013.

“When we went through the show, the first run-through,” Hunter says, “it took me right back to London, walking into Morgan Studios. I felt like I was standing in the middle of it again.” Trumpeter Steven Bernstein, who played with Reed on 2000’s *Ecstasy* and the 2003 concept album *The Raven*, remembers the rehearsals as “intense work. Lou knew what he wanted. He was very demanding on the rhythm section” – Reed veterans Fernando Saunders on bass and drummer Tony ‘Thunder’ Smith. “I don’t know if Lou was nervous as much as he wanted to get it right,” Bernstein says. “And I remember the feeling afterwards – Lou just shook up the room.

Ezrin was most amazed that *Berlin* live was, as he puts it, “on a very strange level quite joyous. When we made the record, it wasn’t supposed to be depressing throughout. There was supposed to be darkness and moments of triumph, deep sadness and surrender. You would go through all of those emotions.” At St Ann’s, *Berlin* “actually sounded triumphant.”

The opening night “was a scary thing for Lou,” Ezrin continues. “He’s going out there with the thing he loved and so many people hated. And Lou – he was ecstatic, the happiest I’d ever seen him. He knew he had nailed the landing.

“I can’t get my head around how long ago it was,” Ezrin says of *Berlin* 50 years on, “how young we were and how Lou’s not here any more. That’s the other thing. I don’t think he’s gone. I think of Lou in the present tense. He is one of the greatest poets America has ever had, and I consider it one of the great privileges of my life to have worked with him.” Ⓜ

Courtesy Garth Richardson, Getty (2), Shutterstock

20

I CAN'T STAND IT

(from *VU*, 1985)

The legendary lost album in kick-ass manifest.

Auspicious timing: with everyone from R.E.M. to The Jesus And Mary Chain polishing the Velvets' crown, spruced-up 1969 recordings for the abandoned fourth MGM/Verve album emerged. A droll domestic squalor vignette ("I live with 13 dead cats") driven by Reed/Morrison's rattling locked groove and Tucker's snare-snap, I Can't Stand It presented the post-Cale band as a bridge between *WL/WH*'s wired gnarl and *Loaded*'s liquid propulsion. Here was a freshly contemporary-sounding Velvet Underground, and they rocked. *KC*

19

WHAT GOES ON

(from *1969 – Velvet Underground Live With Lou Reed*, 1974)

New line-up, new sound, new freedom.

Post-Cale, Reed found breathing space, manifesting in What Goes On's choogling fluidity and uplifting sentiment ("Lady, be good… You know it'll work alright"), though this being Reed, confusion and doubt crept in ("one minute up, one minute down"). The new Yule-assisted age extended to prolonged jams on-stage, like exercises in proto-Can hypnosis, and here What Goes On's serene coda doubled in length, the guitars and organ weaving like tangled ribbons around a maypole, an ecstatic gateway to transcend the writer's personality crises. *MA*

18

VICIOUS

(from *Transformer*, 1972)

Cat-fighting man comes out swinging.

According to John Cale, Lou Reed always wanted to be "queen bitch", a target firmly achieved on *Transformer*'s opening track. Initially a fey S&M vendetta, Venus in a bipperty-bopperty hat, the Andy Warhol-inspired "you hit me with a flower" escalates quickly to "why don't you swallow razor blades?", surreal manglings and sexual confusion. It's the sound of someone maddened by a claustrophobic, back-biting scene, sashaying bass and stiletto-tap cowbell ambushed by Mick Ronson's glorious scratch-your-eyes-out guitar, a mirror of Reed's increasingly furious shriek. Blood drawn. *VS*

17

WHITE LIGHT/ WHITE HEAT

(from *White Light/White Heat*, 1968)

A two-minute rush that stretched to 10 on-stage.

There's no middle ground on Reed's paean to/caution about methamphetamine. Speed tickles the singer and infuriates him; it lights his eyes and dims them. The studio recording is pure chaos, Moe Tucker patiently crashing cymbals while John Cale double times piano – a jauntier counterpart to Sister Ray. And proved durable. Bluegrass giant Ralph Stanley covered it for Nick Cave's Lawless film, a fitting call-back to the song's roots in George Jones's White Lightning. *CN*

"There's Nothing I Want To Change"

The greatness and perfection of Walk On The Wild Side, by its engineer, KEN SCOTT.

I knew very little about Lou Reed before we got together at Trident with David [Bowie] and Mick Ronson to make *Transformer*. And I can't say I knew much more about him when we finished. He was more a physical presence than a mental presence in the studio, let's put it that way.

Unlike *Ziggy Stardust*, where there was an overall, identifiable sound, with *Transformer* each song has its own personality. And it feels kind of out of time. On Walk On The Wild Side, as soon as I heard Ritchie Dharma playing with sticks, it seemed completely wrong, like a march. So I dashed down to the drum booth and asked him if he had brushes. He gave that a try and it completely worked. Herbie Flowers was playing upright bass but came up with the idea of adding electric bass. It's an iconic sound now, but Herbie admits he did it to double the session fee – 14 pounds as opposed to seven!

It's one of the best tracks I've ever worked on. There's nothing I want to change no matter how much I listen to it. The strings that Mick Ronson wrote for it were just exquisite.

A couple of weeks after finishing the album I was in a Chinese restaurant just up the road from Trident, and a whole bunch of RCA people came over to the table, saying, "Hey, guess who's here?" And Lou came over, and he had no idea who I was. Absolutely no idea whatsoever.

As told to Danny Eccleston

16

THE BED

(from *Berlin*, 1973)

Speed, domestic abuse, suicide, and its aftermath.

Side two of *Berlin*'s stark triumvirate of ballads reaches its grimly celestial nadir with the intimately harrowing scene that finds Jim surveying where Caroline "took a razor and cut her wrists that odd and fateful night." Coated in heavenly keyboards and Canadian multi-instrumentalist Gene Martynec's Penderecki-like chorale, Reed channels Jim's speed-fried psyche with broken sensitivity, concluding, "I'm not at all sad that it stopped this way." NME's Nick Kent rightly described the song as *Berlin*'s "real *pièce de resistance*." *KN*

15

FEMME FATALE

(from *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, 1967)

Are you ready to be heartbroken?

Imagine writing a song as concisely cutting and melodically memorable as Femme Fatale and consigning it to B-side status. But that's how Reed's doo wop lullaby about socialite actress Edie Sedgwick began life, propping up its gentle sonic sibling Sunday Morning in 1966. Inspired by Andy Warhol's title, Reed carved out a soft-focus demolition of the male ego before handing the lyrics to Nico to sternly let romantic boys everywhere know that they were out of their depth. *TK*

14

CANDY SAYS

(from *The Velvet Underground*, 1969)

Third album opener wipes the sonic slate clean.

After the chaotic ecstasies of the previous album's closing Sister Ray, this gorgeous ballad opened up a whole new world. Doug Yule's voice did not challenge in the same way Lou Reed's or Nico's did, and the restraint of the arrangement allowed listeners instant communion with the song's theme – that of making the most profound physical change of all. "What do you think I'd see," Reed wrote and Yule sang, "If I could walk away from me?" Jarring in the best possible way. *DD*

13

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

(from *Transformer*, 1972)

An ode to the polymorphously perverse.

Reed called the characters in his signature hit "the kind of people you sometimes see at parties but don't dare approach." So his vicarious invitation to rub shoulders with Holly, Candy Darling and the Warhol gang is what gives this such a voyeuristic charge. Bowie's hushed, minimalist production, propelled by session bassist Herbie Flowers' slip-n-slide groove, makes us lean further in, until it feels like we're Reed's plus-one on the Factory floor, privy to all his juicy insider info. *BdM*

12

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

(from *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, 1967

Revel revel: a merciless but revelatory fable.

Listen to the country yodel of the demo on 1995 box set *Peel Slowly And See* and it's amazing it mutated into this old-world *danse macabre*, a Gormenghast dirge driven inexorably towards the cliff edge by glittering prepared piano, cast-iron drums and ergot-crazed guitar. Nico delivers Lou Reed's Cinderella lament like a tarot reading, describing a "poor girl" chasing a fantasy, putting on "hand-me-down" costumes – not least an ominous "blackened shroud". A mortality/morality tale, it might lift the veil, but it's still clothed in splendour. *VS*

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Sweet sensation: The Velvet Underground at Andy Warhol's Factory, 1969 (from left) Lou Reed, Moe Tucker, Sterling Morrison and Doug Yule.

A LICK AND SOME SHTICK GET SYLVIE SIMMONS ON HER FEET

11

SWEET JANE

(from *Rock N Roll Animal*, 1974)

What Lou Reed liked most about Sweet Jane was the lick. "It was my first great lick," he said in a 2000 interview, "and I really am enormously fond of it." Can't argue with that, it's a perfect lick. The live version that opens *Rock N Roll Animal* begins with a four-minute intro that's *all* lick – an instrumental with fine rock guitar workouts by Reed's band, before he saunters on to applause. The band were reportedly instructed to stretch it out as long as possible while Reed's tour manager was backstage arguing with the promoter about money before he'd let the singing start.

So there's the lick, but there's also the simplicity of the whole structure: not too fast or slow, just three chords (though when Reed went on Elvis Costello's talk show Spectacle, he demonstrated a "secret" B-minor transition chord in the chorus). It has the light touch of glam, the loud dual guitars of heavy rock, and a rousing two-word chorus that's hard not to sing along to and, at a show, impossible.

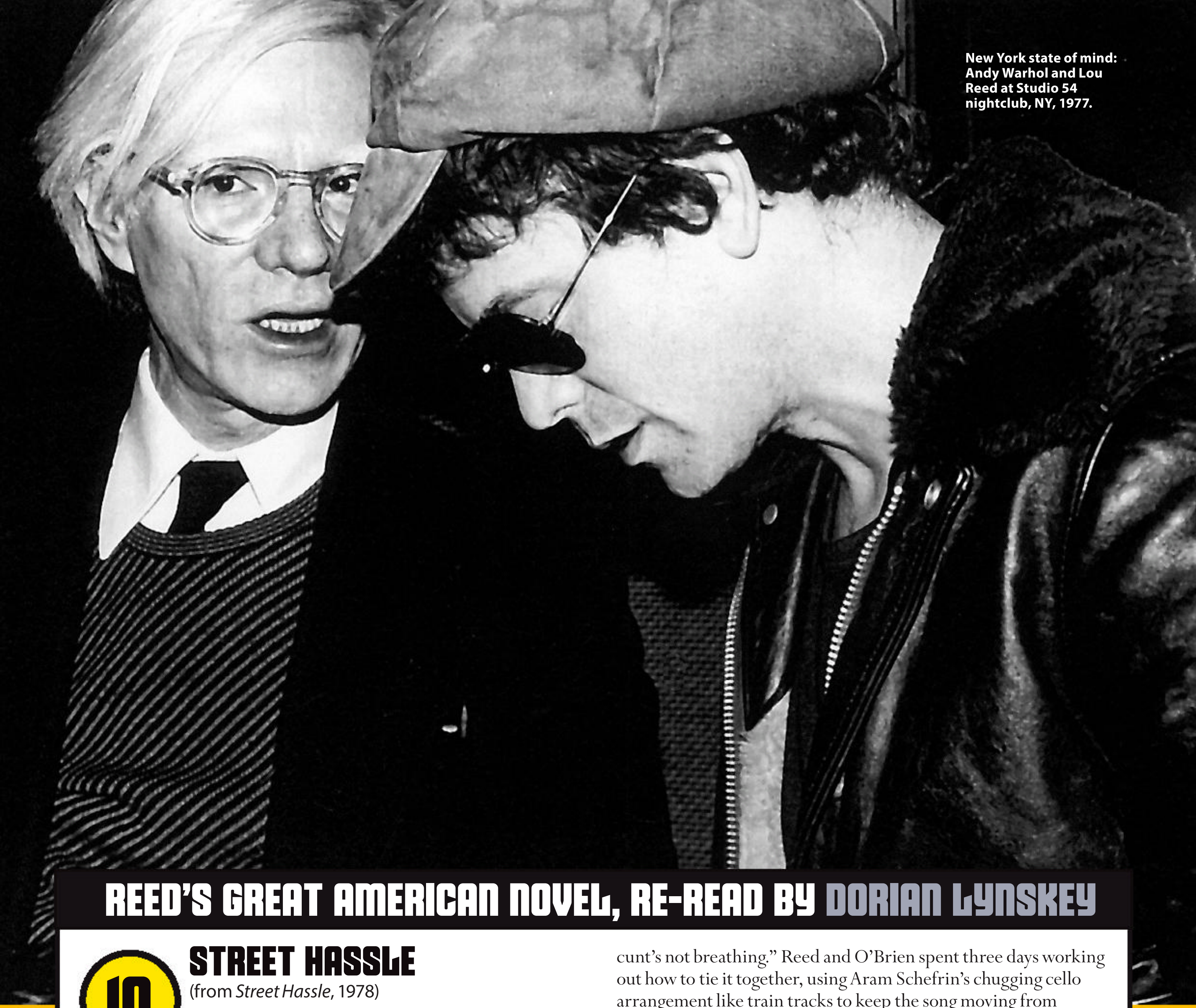
A great live song then. Written in 1969, it had already been on two live Velvet Underground LPs – *Live At Max's Kansas City* (1972) and *1969: Velvet Underground Live With Lou Reed* (1974) – as well as on 1970's Velvet Underground studio album *Loaded*. Having left the band, Reed was eager to reclaim songs he wrote and recorded with them. Four of the five on *Rock N Roll Animal* answer that description, and Sweet Jane topped the setlist.

LOU
REED
ROCK
N
ROLL
ANIMAL

"THE BAND WERE INSTRUCTED TO STRETCH IT OUT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE WHILE REED'S TOUR MANAGER ARGUED ABOUT MONEY."

It's a love song, kind of. When he first played it in 1969 it sounded much more like a love-gone-wrong song than it does here, starting soft and building to something heavy. The lyrics, which also changed over time, tell an ambiguous story. In the first line the protagonist is waiting with a "suitcase in my hand" – a classic line for travelling musicians since Robert Johnson recorded Love In Vain in 1939 and the Stones nicked it 30 years later. Then it introduces two more characters, Jack, a banker, and Jane, a clerk. While the narrator's playing in a band, Jack and Jane spend their nights at home, a couple of straights listening to a classical music radio show. Well maybe not that straight; Jack's wearing a corset and Jane a waistcoat. There's a line bemoaning the time when "ladies" fell for poets where now they "roll their eyes." But all in all it's a feel-good song. Whether or not there was a real-life Jane who left Lou for a rich man and broke his heart, it's not going to stop us yelling his/her name at the top of our lungs when that chorus comes around.

Best covers: the rock versions by Mott The Hoople (1972) and Jim Carroll (1983), and the slower, darker Cowboy Junkies (1988) and Miley Cyrus (2020).



New York state of mind: Andy Warhol and Lou Reed at Studio 54 nightclub, NY, 1977.

REED'S GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL, RE-READ BY DORIAN LYNSKEY

10

STREET HASSLE

(from *Street Hassle*, 1978)

Lou Reed believed that if rock'n'roll could emulate underworld chroniclers such as William Burroughs and Hubert Selby Jr, then "You'd have the greatest thing on earth." Street Hassle was his magnificent attempt to wrestle the whole of New York City, as he knew it, into a song, and all of himself, too: tender, brutal, desperate. "That is me," he said, "as much as you can get on record." But while his backstreet symphony sounds like a conscious masterpiece, it was born in pandemonium.

In 1977 Reed was as frazzled as one of his characters. He was breaking up with Rachel, the trans woman who had lit up *Coney Island Baby*, and maddened by a taxing diet of Scotch and heavy-duty amphetamines. While trying to overdub a rejected live album into a releasable state, he alienated producer Richard Robinson and most of his band, leaving him to salvage the album with engineer Rod O'Brien at the Record Plant, off Times Square.

Street Hassle was the only song built from scratch. It was a scrawny little thing, just two minutes long, until Arista's Clive Davis suggested expanding it into a potential hit single. Reed exceeded the brief by a mile. His three-part suite, which took up almost one third of the album, was not just impossibly long for the radio but unplayably graphic, with lines like, "Hey, that cunt's not breathing." Reed and O'Brien spent three days working out how to tie it together, using Aram Schefrin's chugging cello arrangement like train tracks to keep the song moving from station to station. Serendipity delivered Bruce Springsteen, who was working downstairs on *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* and ended up lending his rough-diamond sincerity to an uncredited monologue. "When he did it, it sounded real," said Reed.

LOU REED
STREET HASSLE

Street Hassle was both a hymn and a requiem to the outcasts of a city that was itself an outcast. Following near bankruptcy and the chaotic summer blackout, New York was a byword for crime and decay, but Reed didn't hold that against it. The first part, Waltzing Matilda, describes a liaison between a woman and a male prostitute with unexpected sweetness: "Neither one regretted a thing." The second, Street Hassle, fictionalises the death of Warholite Eric Emerson, who reportedly overdosed at a party and was dumped in the street. In the climactic Slipaway, an unravelling Reed lays to rest his three-year relationship with Rachel. The meaning of "Slip away" slides from a sexual rendezvous to a callous recommendation to a final exit.

Reed isn't just observing these people; he's down there with them. Street Hassle is about the choices you make when you don't feel you have a choice at all, and how little difference these personal dramas of life, sex and death make to New York. The city knows this happens every night. The city doesn't care. The city moves on.

"A HYMN AND A REQUIEM TO THE OUTCASTS OF A CITY THAT WAS ITSELF AN OUTCAST."

9 I'M WAITING FOR THE MAN

(from *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, 1967)

Uptown junk: brutal realism becomes rock'n'roll gold.

This famously vivid portrait of transgression depicts a man "sick and dirty, more dead than alive" taking the subway up to Harlem to score. Each jolt of the train and feverish shudder is felt in Cale's stabbing piano and Lou's down-tuned, metallic guitar thrash. Heavy and discordant, it was immediately adopted by Bowie/The Yardbirds/The Stooges; garlanded as proto-punk and hard rock. All the more revelatory, then, to hear the Dylan-ish 1965 demo: a laid-back, conversational blues. *JB*

8 CAROLINE SAYS II

(from *Berlin*, 1973)

Minimalist storytelling with a shiver of Alaskan air.

LOU REED
BERLIN

Domestic violence rears its ugly head early on this numb hymn, a snare punching out the complaint, "Why is it that you beat me?" over a descending acoustic guitar motif. A black-as-pitch reworking of *White Light/White Heat* offcut Stephanie Says laced with desperation and suicidal verve (there's nothing ha-ha 'funny' to its window-smashing bridge), Reed's unnerving realism and stony narration blunted by producer Bob Ezrin's stately piano and soothing Mellotron. A beautiful downer. *AC*

7 SUNDAY MORNING

(from *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, 1967)

Nothing to do with croissants and coffee, probably.

Cut and released late in 1966, the first song of the Velvets' career begins with the nursery chime of a celesta and Lou sing-sighing as sweetly as he ever would. It starts, early dawning, as "a restless feeling by my side" and becomes a hazy Sunday somewhere in the middle-distance, music billowing like lace curtains. The melody is Dylan meets The Mamas & The Papas, the lyric evokes "all the streets you crossed not so long ago" as if something dramatic happened on Saturday night and he's sleepwalking through its echoes. *JI*

6 PERFECT DAY

(from *Transformer*, 1972)

The as-good-as-perfect song.

LOU REED-TRANSFORMER

Reed always denied Perfect Day's air of dreamy, narcotic bliss and its threatening coda "you're going to reap just what you sow" was heroin homage. In fact, it was written for (and to) his future first wife Bettye Kronstad. The afternoon spent drinking sangria in Central Park happened "exactly as he says" according to Kronstad. With producers Mick Ronson providing piano and arrangement and David Bowie on keyboards, the lovelorn loveliness is in your face, but there's despair beneath that bliss. *JA*

Getty (2)

"The Big Thing For Me Was The Drone"

VU acolyte SONIC BOOM on the ultimate indie-rock influence.

I was 14. I'd read this book, Popism: The Warhol '60s, and I'd seen the banana sleeve in there. Later I picked up the first album in Virgin in Coventry – totally on the strength of the sleeve; I'd never heard a note of it – and took it back to Rugby School, borrowed another boy's hi-fi, put my headphones on and… Wow, Sunday Morning – what a beautiful song! And then the rest of it just blew my mind.

The big thing for me, that I took from The Velvet Underground into Spacemen 3, was the drone. That linked a lot of the music that had an impact on me. And the other thing is that their influences weren't obvious – the closest things I could discern were The Yardbirds and The Who… and Lee Hazlewood! A weird combination – how could you design something like that?

Then there was the variety. Sister Ray is a key song, summing up their live energy. The Gift and Murder Mystery represent that art-damaged vibe that really resonated with the art-school bands that followed them. Pale Blue Eyes is just one of the most beautiful songs ever written. I mean, they really did write the book on modern indie bands.

With the lyrics, there was some precedent, I suppose, with people like Jacques Brel talking about the seamier side of reality, but Lou Reed took it so much further. Heroin is such a brave song, not only to write but to vocalise. The flipside is the 'Jesus' thing – Jesus as a symbol for a yearning for something unobtainable. Or an ideal of perfect benignness. I think amphetamines might for Lou have been a hyperlink to that Jesus place – the blinding white light that felt, maybe, like a gift from God.

Musicians identify with The Velvet Underground's story – the band who couldn't get run over in their own time. But I think maybe it was a necessary part of their evolution to always be the underdog. Having been in a band that was a little bit like that, I can relate!

As told to Danny Eccleston

5 HEROIN

(from *Rock N Roll Animal*, 1974)

Lonely self-abuse reinvented as big-stage triumph.

From its first demo, the unflinching yet poetic Heroin sexualised the rush, its *accelerando* and *ritardando* edging to euphoria, fleshed out by the Velvets with compulsively frotted guitars and headboard-knocking drums, desolate even in climax. A year after 1972's ringing articulation at Le Bataclan with John Cale, Lou's new guitarist Steve Hunter rearranged Heroin live as a crunching, cock-rocking Liebestod, a welcoming gateway to the Ziggy hordes. Vulgar travesty or majestic rendering of the "dropper"'s transfiguration "just like Jesus's son"? Lou himself was conflicted. *MS*

4 ROCK & ROLL

(from *Loaded*, 1970)

Liberation theology, with a great beat.

the velvet underground loaded

Popular music is full of paeans to its own power, and this *Loaded* zinger conforms to a lot of genre conventions: you can – you must! – "dance to a rock'n'roll station". But if such songs are often cynical attempts to game airplay, Reed sounds sincere. Rock & Roll is about the music's transformative potential, about the possibilities it presents for reinvention and escape; for a disorientation of the senses and untrammelled euphoria. Reed's perennial themes, in other words, recalibrated by the Velvets with pure joy. *JM*

3 SATELLITE OF LOVE

(from *Transformer*, 1972)

Transcendental space ballad for a cheating lover.

There's real Pickwick pop economy to Reed's highly emotive take on the space race, first eyed as a potential hit during VU's *Loaded* sessions. This lighter, less abrasive version, led by Mick Ronson's bittersweet piano, proves affecting way beyond the sum of its simple parts – relatively benign verses and hooky chorus bom-bom-boms a Trojan horse for its accusatory middle eight. Bowie's trilling falsetto nods to Memory Of A Free Festival on a flawless handclapped coda. *AC*

2 PALE BLUE EYES

(From *The Velvet Underground*, 1969)

For those who've loved and know they've lost.

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

The '65 country-folk demo with harmonica solo had stalker-esque lyrics of homicidal jealousy. When it was reprised, Pale Blue Eyes was softened into the sweetest, etherised gospel melancholy over a love object married to another man. For serial transgressor Lou, why does a spot of sinful adultery matter? And so it proves, as it imperceptibly broadens focus to ponder friendship versus love, the impossibility of truly knowing anyone else and the sad cosmic joke of being denied the heart's desire. Listen to this, and it's more bearable. *IH*

THE 50 GREATEST LOU REED AND THE VELVET UNDERGROUND SONGS

TASTE THE WHIP IN LOVE NOT GIVEN LIGHTLY, INSISTS JON SAVAGE

1

VENUS IN FURS

(from *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, 1967)

FROM THE FIRST NOTES OF ITS MEASURED introduction, Venus In Furs is the most menacing of all the songs on *The Velvet Underground & Nico* – quite an achievement on an album that was designed to provoke.

At the point when the bulk of the album was recorded, spring 1966, the group were in perfect sync with their patron: their late-1965 link-up with Andy Warhol coincided with the artist's most confrontational, taboo-busting phase. The first known recording of Venus In Furs was taped in July 1965, just a month after the first showing of Vinyl, Warhol's S&M-saturated version of A Clockwork Orange featuring Factory house poet Gerard Malanga as "a juvenile delinquent in leather", being tortured by professional sadists to a soundtrack of singles by The Kinks, The Rolling Stones and Martha & The Vandellas. This violent miasma permeated the Factory in late '65.

That miasma penetrated many of Reed's lyrics, immersed as he was in transgressive writers including Hubert Selby Jr, William Burroughs and John Rechy, all of whom were involved in the then-highly marginal gay underworld. Venus In Furs is unusual, however, in that it directly references the title and protagonist of an existing book: Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novella of psychic and sexual domination – with Severin as the man bewitched and enslaved by the central female character, Wanda. Published in 1870, Venus In Furs gave the author's surname to the syndrome that he so well delineated.

But the song is also a reverie. Many of Reed's early compositions explore and inhabit dreams: subconscious states like The Black Angel's Death Song, which evokes the tumble of words that occur when you're falling asleep (a favourite experiment of the Surrealists); the hallucinatory 5am feel of Sunday Morning; the illusory social whirl of All Tomorrow's Parties; the obliterating narcotic trances of I'm Waiting For The Man and Heroin. New York City also permeates the 11 songs on the album, whether it be in drug deal locations, the sensibility of the Factory, and the means used by New Yorkers to escape the harshness of their environment: wrap your troubles in dreams.

VENUS IN FURS WAS PROBABLY WRITTEN IN LATE spring 1965. It doesn't feature in Reed's May demos recorded either with John Cale or at Pickwick in Queens, where Reed was employed as a staff songwriter. Yet from the beginning of the fledgling group, when it was recorded by a trio of John Cale, Sterling Morrison and Reed in July 1965, it appears to have been a keynote number: we hear 15 minutes of run-throughs on the 1995 VU box set *Peel Slowly And See*, albeit minus drums – Angus MacLise wasn't around and Moe Tucker hadn't yet joined. John Cale's high voice accentuates the folky, almost medieval feel of the song's melody. Eventually, Reed was persuaded to take the vocal and that's how it remained.

By the early-1966 Factory rehearsals, Reed was in charge: on Disc 4 of 2012's Super Deluxe edition of *The Velvet Underground & Nico* you can hear him teaching the others the lyrics over a basic bluesy figure – before they all relax into the riff of Bo Diddley's Crackin' Up. Venus In Furs was also among the nine songs recorded for the first album at Scepter Studios with Norman

Getty/Adam Ritchie (3), Getty

Forbidden fruit: (clockwise from main) The Velvet Underground entertain the New York Society for Clinical Psychiatry at Hotel Domenico, NYC, January 13, 1966; John Cale and Lou Reed at Cafe Bizarre, Greenwich Village, December 1965; Moe Tucker in Piero Heliczer's film Venus In Furs, November 1965; (from left) Sterling Morrison, Andy Warhol, Nico and Gerard Malanga at the Factory, 1965.

Andy Warhol
Andy Warhol

Dolph that April: the group have arrived at the final tempo, but there is still a rough, garage feel and Reed's vocal veers towards the declamatory rather than the detached. Recorded in Hollywood during May 1966, the final album version transcends all the others.

"Get right into it," Reed instructed the group in January '66, and there is no intro to Venus In Furs: you're pitched into it and that's how it stays. Dominant in the mix is John Cale's electric viola, the first real evidence on record of the knowledge he had received from working with John Cage, Tony Conrad and La Monte Young. His unstable drones – constantly driven by feather-light punctuations that propel the sound forward like the flick of a whip – evoke a sense of possibility and a profound destabilisation. Something monstrous is being expressed here, and you're on your own, lost in the constantly shifting, electric buzz.

Reed's lyric is a masterpiece of economy, a hundred-or-so-page book distilled into a few lines. The theatricality of the practice is beautifully caught in the costumes – the shiny, shiny boots of leather, the ermine furs – as well as the accoutrements: the whip, the belt, the thongs. The commitment required is sealed by the demand for blood. Reed's masterstroke is the middle eight, where he breaks into the first person: "I am tired, I am weary/I could sleep for a thousand years/A thousand dreams that would awake me/Different colours made of tears." This is another kind of dream, one that takes place at the edge of endurance, if not exhaustion.

"THIS IS ANOTHER KIND OF DREAM, ONE THAT TAKES PLACE AT THE EDGE OF ENDURANCE, IF NOT EXHAUSTION."

With one of Reed's best vocal performances, perfectly adapted to the stately arrangement, Venus In Furs ends in a burst of guitar wreckage, as the emotions and desires kept in check boil over. Apart from domestic violence scenarios like The Crystals' He Hit Me (It Felt Like A Kiss) and the hints contained in The Beatles' Girl, the song was the first to explicitly explore the twinning of sexuality and pain, and was a central part of the first album's considerable impact. It remained a live favourite well into 1970, and when begun during the 1993 reunion concerts, it was greeted with a huge cheer. Venus In Furs exists in its own time, and its time is always now.

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#2 WINTER 2022-23
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YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

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Nothing to fear but fear itself

With producer Daniel Lanois in tow, the Tuaregs venture into the beyond on their ninth album, recorded in LA, Paris and Algeria. By **David Hutcheon**. Illustration by **Joe Wilson**.

Tinariwen

★★★★

Amatssou

WEDGE. CD/DL/LP

Tinariwen
Amatssou

PUTTING ASIDE Bono's much-derided dancing at the Festival in the Desert – available on YouTube (and, for what it's worth, more power to him for losing himself in the music) – there are few obvious connections between U2 and Tinariwen. Yet, while they don't sound like brothers in arms, *The Unforgettable Fire*, recorded more than 15 years before the Tuaregs made any international impact, shares its ambience with the pioneers of the Saharan blues, their guitars' sense of wide, open space, their hope for sanctuary beyond the horizon and their ability to convey the experience of struggle beneath an endless, unforgiving sky.

Dig deeper and a more tangible link eventually reveals itself. In 2009, MOJO witnessed the recording of *Imidiwan* in the hills around Tessalit, in the north-east of Mali, where Ibrahim Ag Alhabib, the band's de facto leader, lives. This was, in his words, "where the guitar makes the sounds I want". As security in the Sahara became more of an issue, it became harder to find the sound they were looking for without risking their lives. The extremists who seized control of that part of the desert outlawed music, with transgressors facing possible death, and Intidao, one of the members of the extended family that Tinariwen had become, was among those taken hostage by the Islamist group Ansar Dine.

Though he was released, it was clear being part of a collective whose mythos included taking up arms against the Malian government was no guarantee of well-being. If business had to be attended to, it was going to have to be done elsewhere. Given, however, the musicians' unease in cities, where they feel constricted by walls and regulations, they couldn't just book any old Abbey Road. *Emmaar* (2014) and *Elwan* (2017) were recorded in – where else? – Joshua Tree, where the rocky landscapes of the Mojave Desert meet the dunes of the Colorado Desert. Out of the box, then, the most surprising thing about Tinariwen's ninth studio LP is that it has taken this long for Daniel Lanois, an integral part of U2's ascendancy, to be called on to occupy the producer's chair.

Though the band have inched closer to home since – Mauritania and Western Sahara hosted the sessions for their most recent LP, *Amadjar* (let's not count last year's *Kel Tinariwen*, a substandard dig into prehistory that didn't feature Ibrahim) – circumstances meant a return to Tessalit was out of the question (*see Back Story*). No matter. The LP title, a Tamashek word that translates as "beyond the fear", introduces listeners to a terroir the six stalwarts of the band have called their own for decades. So began the now-familiar process of piecing together tracks across the ether: in Nashville, pedal-steel and fiddle player Fats Kaplin and banjo maestro Wes Corbett; percussionist Amar Chaoui in Paris; Lanois in LA; Tinariwen in a tent in southern Algeria, using equipment belonging to Imarhan, one of the Tuareg groups that came to prominence in their wake and who now own a studio in Tamanrasset. The geology may have reminded them of home, perhaps even conjured up an approximation of that sound beloved of Ibrahim, recorded under the stars as a breeze blows through the strings; the 12,000-year-old cave paintings nearby underlining the fact that art can always be created in the most unlikely of locations.

And, as always with Tinariwen, the location inhabits the music. Traditionally, Tinariwen's guitarists and singers have represented the storytelling poet-troubadour, the percussionists are their mode of transport; with the fiddle and pedal steel – Kaplin also appeared on *Emmaar* – we have the desert that surrounds them. Though both Kek Alghalm and Anemouhagh are elevated by flurries of bluegrass banjo, Kaplin creates platforms upon which the central players then weave their tales. On Arajghiyine, his notes stretch off into infinity; his solo on the outro of Tenere Den is a wonder and the perfect riposte to anyone who wishes Tinariwen could get back to the unsophisticated swing of their earlier work. Arajghiyine is followed by Imzad, played on a desert fiddle, underlining the commitment to the Tinariwen sound straight after allowing it to be stretched in unconventional directions.

Now, such praise may have seasoned Lanois watchers recoiling at the thought of him going too far (painting over-grandiose, multi-layered big pictures, viz Robbie Robertson's eponymous 1987 album), but there's only one moment when the production distracts from the players, a brief yet clunky guitar overdub on Arajghiyine. Listeners who love a wide soundstage, however, with well-separated guitars coming at you from all angles, will be in heaven. Thankfully, the guests shun the spotlight, leaving Ibrahim, Alhassane Ag Touhami and Abdallah Ag Alhousseyni to concentrate on that elusive sound, the guitars cleaner and crisper than those that introduced Tinariwen to the world 20 years ago. Lanois brings more surprises than you'd expect to tunes by a group with a 30-year recording history, yet never smothers the players and wisely leaves them to be themselves.

As a result, Tinariwen kick harder than they have for a while. Ibrahim, in particular, seems more focused than on recent releases – 'energised' would be the wrong word for a man who has turned sounding worn down by the tribulations of life into an inspiring art form. Yet the key track may be the one that closes the album, on which the regular Tinariwen team play little part. Tinde (Outro) is the traditional sound of a party, of old friends gathering at an oasis to celebrate a reunion, the women playing their drums and singing while the men dance. It's a glimpse of real life. The day is over, camels can be tethered, tales can be told, food can be cooked over open flames. An unforgettable fire still burns in the Sahara.

> "Listeners who love a wide soundstage, with guitars coming from all angles, will be in heaven."

Ward Robinson

BACK STORY: NO DIRECTION HOME

- Pairing Daniel Lanois (above) with Tinariwen may sound obvious with hindsight but the road to this hook-up was anything but smooth: sessions booked at Jack White's Nashville studio for 2021 were kiboshed by the pandemic. When the North American contingent arranged to travel to Africa, Lanois tested positive for Covid and their plans collapsed and Tinariwen set up camp in Djanet, an oasis on a sandstone plane in southern Algeria. Who knew you wouldn't be able to social distance in the Sahara?

Durand Jones: veering from the ambient to the gritty.

DURAND JONES
WAIT TIL I GET OVER

Durand Jones

★★★★

Wait Til I Get Over

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

Louisiana singer cuts loose from The Indications for solo debut.

IN THE WAKE of the disco moves of 2021's *Private Space*, his third album with The Indications, Durand Jones steps out on his own, returning to a soul sound that veers from the ambient to the gritty. Themed around Jones's hometown of Hillaryville, Louisiana (described by him in a spoken-word monologue as having been "founded by eight slaves who received it as a form of reparations after the American Civil War"), it's naturally a nostalgic affair, not least with the episodic, near-eight-minute-long Letters To My 17-Year-Old Self. Elsewhere, Jones spotlights his vocal chops by creating a one-man overdubbed gospel choir in the ambient title track, comes over like Otis Redding fronting the Stones in Lord Have Mercy and offers a gorgeous, faithful rendition of Donny Hathaway's Someday We'll All Be Free gate-crashed partway through by Indianapolis rapper Skypp. Multifaceted and consistently brilliant.

Tom Doyle

SBT

★★★★

Joan Of All

OCEAN OMEN. CD/DL/LP

Newly abbreviated singer-songwriter makes powerful comeback.

It's been 12 years since Sarabeth Tucek's grief-blasted *Get Well Soon*, but while the path to this third album might have been winding, it's led her somewhere beautiful. *Joan Of All* picks through complicated issues of family, selfhood and human fragility, starting with a childhood photograph (Joan Says) and ending with a suite of songs alive with dogs, storms and long-dark-night visions. Lou Reed, Bill Callahan and Kim Gordon feel like presiding spirits – Tucek has that impeccable phrasing that makes the word "stoop" sound like a whole short story – but street-poet nonchalance is undercut by odd distortion (Sheep), flickering Kristin Hersh auras (Cathy Says) or, on the devastating party fears of Happiness, a tremor of Phaedra-is-my-name psychedelia. By this double album's end, it feels like a breakthrough in every way, the sound of an artist who has not only forged on, but also hit a glorious peak.

Victoria Segal

THE LAST ROTATION OF EARTH

BC Camplight

★★★★

The Last Rotation Of Earth

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Brian Christinzio's superb latest packs songs "resembling little films".

Concerned Tesco delivery drivers; men in Kermit The Frog onesies; hotel room estrangement watching Dickinson's Real Deal. It's the small, tragic details you notice on *TLROE*, an extraordinary record BC Camplight remade in two months after he and his fiancée's split. As our Philadelphia-to-Manchester, UK transplant unspools his expectation-confounding, playfully post-modernist triumph, you wonder if he's been snorting dust from Strawberry Studios, Stockport, such is the 10cc-like flair with which this knowing, wildly imaginative pop is essayed. Great, too, that the black humour which can lighten break-up LP solipsism is wholly present. "Got a paper bag on my hat rack", sings the protagonist of I'm Ugly, while the wry-but-devastating Going Out On A Low Note posits: "Now, I'm not positive/But I'm pretty sure/You shouldn't cry when you listen to Faith No More."

James McNair

Don Letts

★★★

Outta Sync

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

"If you don't like it, blame Covid" – what reggae's renaissance man did under lockdown's heavy manners.

"It's hard to be a rebel when you get your washing done." The Rebel Dread targets Gen Z's boomerang kids on what is, remarkably, his solo debut. After a lifetime of compilations and collaborations, the coronavirus and a clutch of bass lines from Youth have compelled Letts to stray from sidelines upon which he has never been particularly adept at standing. If the results lack the sufferation you desire ("That's just the way it goes," he shrugs fatalistically on Present Dilemmas), that's a strong hint at the contentment Letts enjoys today – discomfort felt on a visit to Africa becomes a surprising feature on Civilisation. The participation of Terry Hall – on the musical and political highlight, The Universe Knows What You've Done – Hollie Cook and Wayne Coyne mean *Outta Sync* is a certainty to be heard joyfully wafting from west London windows all summer.

DON LETTS
OUTTA SYNC

David Hutcheon

The National

★★★

First Two Pages of Frankenstein

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Taylor, Sufjan, and Phoebe help push pals from the doldrums, barely.

Sometime after 2019's sprawling *I Am Easy To Find*, The National's Matt Berninger suffered a year-long bout of writer's block. But Mary Shelley, a return to the road, and the support of the fraternal pairs who shape the rest of these prepossessed if self-obsessed mainstays spurred him forward to places he's often been – a relationship's obsessively detailed dissolution, framed by cirrus clouds of distant hope. A divorce anthem with a refrain fit for a Noah Baumbach passion play, Eucalyptus worries about what to do with a couple's cache of ostentatious bottled water; a stately piano duet with Taylor Swift, The Alcott offers early glimpses of reconciliation that, by LP's end, settle into a state of desperate trust, once-feverish love yielding to dependable friendship. Does that beat the end-everything alternative? Yes, The National seem to say on a sometimes-striking record that suggests new ground without actually reaching it.

Grayson Haver Currin

The Damned

★★★★

Darkadelic

EARMUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Punk misfits' late-era joyride, full of grace and power.

DARKADELIC

The Damned's last LP, 2018's *Evil Spirits*, saw Tony Visconti at the controls, surely a snug fit considering the group's well known Bolan enthusiasms. Yet it was a curiously muted affair, notably devoid of Captain Sensible's bold, six-string star-flights. *Darkadelic* does much to address that imbalance, with the Cap back to showboating magnificently on Bad Weather Girl and Girl I'll Stop At Nothing, and adding vibrant, shimmering psych textures throughout. The eloquent playing of early-'80s bassist Paul Gray, now fully re-embedded, inevitably brings to mind 1982's acid-punk nugget *Strawberries*, the former Hot Rod even going the full Entwistle on the (somewhat courageous) Gary Glitter-lamenting Leader Of The Gang. Meanwhile, Dave Vanian's baritone grows ever more a thing of mystery and beauty – check out the elegiac Western Promise – while Oxy Moron gets to hit his beloved Farfisa setting on the Mariachi-flavoured Motorcycle Man. What's not to like?

Pat Gilbert

Gabriels

★★★

Angels & Queens

ATLAS ARTISTS/PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

At last, the full-length debut album from LA/Sunderland retro-modernist soul trio.

While all but a handful of the songs from the 13-track *Angels & Queens* have already been drip-fed to listeners since 2020 via a series of singles, EPs and last year's seven-track mini-album instalment, Gabriels' desire to take their time with the making of their long-awaited debut album has certainly paid off. The extended team – involving Kendrick Lamar collaborators Sounwave (co-production) and Beach Noise (mixing) – lend this vintage-sounding music a super-modernist polish, and Gabriels fan faves Love And Hate In A Different Time and The Blind sparkle anew. Of the previously unheard tracks, opener Offering swirls with pizzicato strings, horn stabs and Jacob Lusk's impassioned vocal, while multi-movement stomper Great Wind deals with mortality and spirituality in a soul-stirring, air-punching fashion. All in all, a towering achievement and well worth the wait.

Tom Doyle

Friends reunited

Supergroup prove they are definite article on debut album. By Victoria Segal.

For the record: Boygenius's (from left) Lucy Dacus, Phoebe Bridgers and Julien Baker show a collective strength.

Boygenius

★★★★

The Record

POLYDOR/INTERSCOPE. CD/DL/LP

WHEN JULIEN Baker, Phoebe Bridgers and Lucy Dacus released their Boygenius EP in 2018, slyly posing as Crosby, Stills & Nash on the sleeve, it seemed like a one-off statement of companionable solidarity, one unlikely to be repeated when – to use that old-fashioned showbusiness language they quickly make redundant – their individual stars were on the rise. Despite the successes of their three separate albums between 2020 and 2021 – Baker's *Little Oblivions*, Bridgers' *Punisher* and Dacus's *Home Video* – they were drawn back together when Bridgers asked on their group-chat, "Can we be a band again?"

The Record is the welcome response to that question, a set of songs that stands as a show of collective strength without any diminishing of their distinctive personalities. It's a remarkably graceful piece of work, free of moments where an ego clutches at your sleeve, or the wrong kind of creative tension spikes through. The opening a cappella Without You Without Them – a track that might have been recorded at a pre-War church social – pleads for unfettered intimacy, for immersive knowledge of another person. "I want to hear your story and be a part of it/Take your father before you/His mother before him," they sing together, voices rising upwards. "Who would I be without you, without them?"

This idea of knowing and being known is central to *The Record* – how far can you let your true nature show before people turn away? You want to be seen, but how much is too much? "Once I took your medication to know what it's like," admits Bridgers on the three-pronged stadium-folk of Not Strong Enough, but the boundary issues don't stop there. "Will you be an anarchist with me?" goads Baker on Satanist, its atypically horned riff all wisecracking slacker swagger, "Sleep in cars and kill the bourgeoisie?/At least until you find out what a fake I am." (For all the angst, Boygenius are funny, too; the confusingly Elliott Smith-like Leonard Cohen refers to not being "an old man having an existential crisis at a Buddhist monastery/Writing horny poetry".)

There's no doubt there are three people operating here: on Revolution 0 or Emily I'm Sorry, you can hear how Bridgers shakes her songs up like an emotional snowglobe, letting the flurry settle back around her in new drifts and shapes; Baker's more direct attack perfectly serves the raging $20. Dacus, meanwhile, tends to feel like she's scattering pages from her diary while looking you directly in the eye, not least on the astonishing testament of We're In Love, which seems to go beyond earthly love and into the eternal. Yet *The Record* is beautifully integrated, each song feeling like an ongoing conversation, a harmonious thread they can pick up any time. It's very much worth getting to know it.

Lanterns On The Lake

★★★★

Versions Of Us

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Tyneside band follow 2020's *Spook The Herd* in heart-on-sleeve style.

Despite the slippery title, there's no side to *Versions Of Us*. That's not the thump of a back-handed compliment: Lanterns On The Lake's fifth album arrives with the wind-in-your-hair exhilaration of having nothing left to lose, its songs untethered from watchful second-guesses. Singer Hazel Wilde seems to have hooked into a new power supply – one strung between Natalie Merchant and Matt Berninger if Rich Girls and The Saboteur are any clue – while the drumming of Radiohead's Philip Selway cranks the internal pressure higher. String Theory and The Likes Of Us trade in recognisable existential dilemmas, but dignifying the drama of the everyday feels like the point: "Did you hear they consecrated the pavement where we first heard the news?" sings Wilde over Last Transmission's end-times piano. *Versions Of Us* is full of such emotional blue plaque moments, small humans marking their time on a grandly heartfelt scale.

Victoria Segal

Freya Ridings

★★★★

Blood Orange

GOOD SOLDIER/AWAL. CD/DL/LP/MC

Thrusting second LP from BRIT school alumnus.

When Freya Ridings' self-titled, self-written (albeit with assorted helpers) album reached Number 3 in 2019, she seemed set fair until life (a collapsed relationship; the re-kindling of an old one, and in January this year, marriage) and lockdown intervened. The breathing space allowed her to road-test and refine this new material for her core audience, via livestream from the comfort of her parents' house. It's all worked rather well. She's still mistress of a massive anthem and she's still a Florence Welch with added wind tunnel in places, not least I Feel Love (not that I Feel Love, alas) and the appositely titled Dancing In A Hurricane. Yet, there's palette-broadening evolution, hence the cascading melodies of the bitter Weekends ("I'm drunk in some pub, with people that I hardly know/But I'm so fucking lonely") and the Regina Spektor-esque twinkle of Happier Alone. She's doing fine.

John Aizlewood

Daughter

★★★

Stereo Mind Game

4AD. CD/DL/LP

London dream-poppers stick with the formula.

Daughter's third record follows a long break – involving 2017's video game soundtrack album *Music From Before The Storm* and singer Elena Tonra's 2018 solo record as Ex:Re – but it hasn't resulted in a major rethink of their sound. Detuned '90s guitars, stark beats and semi-detached vocals remain as the primary colours on their palette, resulting in a production that is frequently lush but nonetheless tonally samey. It's often boldly confessional stuff: Tonra tackles alcohol-damaged memory in Party and coolly delivers a break-up message in Be On Your Way, while confessing "I have never hurt so badly" amid the reverberating layers of Neptune. *Stereo Mind Game* certainly sustains an atmosphere, but it's a brooding and bleak one, and at times the darkness of Daughter's dream-pop can feel a bit suffocating.

Tom Doyle

Hawkwind

★★★★

The Future Never Waits

CHERRY RED. CD/LP

Album 35 from Space Rock's old gods.

When the Reaper came calling, few were prepared like Aldous Huxley, who asked his wife to inject him with LSD as his last moments approached. Huxley's final trip is among the numerous closures and reflections on the past to be found in *The Future Never Waits*. Lemmy-recalling rocker The End finds chief pilot Dave Brock poignantly recalling years of adventure as past Hawkwind sonic signatures collide, while the mordantly comic The Beginning looks in electronic/acoustic fashion to a post-human existence of uploaded consciousness. A doff of the space helmet must go to new mellotron-minded keyboardist Thighpaulsandra, who piquantly embellishes an uninhibited soundworld of jazz, classic Hawkwind moves and, on affecting closer Trapped In This Modern Age, warm-valves classic rock. It hopefully won't be the last time this venerable rock research group probes the shape of things to come, but if it is, what a way to go out.

Ian Harrison

HAWKWIND
THE FUTURE NEVER WAITS

Bill Pritchard

Bill Pritchard

★★★

Sings Poems By Patrick Woodcock

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

Unsung Midlands songwriter applies melodic nous to Canadian poet's words.

Practically unnoticed at home, floppy fringed Francophile Bill Pritchard upped sticks to Paris in the early '90s, where his rascally literate, evocative pop songs helped him become a cult star, collaborating with Étienne Daho and Françoise Hardy. Pritchard has been on the comeback trail since 2014's *A Trip To The Coast*, his latest inspired by an e-mail friendship with Woodcock that prospered during lockdown. Woodcock's sharply observed poems and snagging phrases perfectly suit Pritchard's ear for an allusive melody on the sensitive, searching reminisces of Electric Typewriter, dramatic picking of Art In G Sharp and heart-on-sleeve vulnerability of The Lowering, his nicotine-stained voice boasting a similar rasp to Stephen Duffy. Best of all is Wind, its bright acoustic strum reminiscent of 1991's masterclass in summer heartbreak, *Jolie*.

Andy Cowan

Skinny Pelembe

★★★

Hardly The Same Snake

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

Doncaster-raised singer-songwriter's second album keeps low to the ground.

Amid the siren-like vocals of this record's closing moments flickers a string of Morse code, a fitting inclusion on a track called Secret Hiding Place. *Hardly The Same Snake* seems to be operating under camouflage, singer-songwriter Doya Beardmore an elusive presence deep inside the songs he so expertly weaves as Skinny Pelembe. There are bright flashes – the Wild Beasts-meet-The Streets of Don't Be Another, Like A Heart Won't Beat's Michael Kiwanuka retro-soul – but even on a track that glitches with the Afrobeat buoyancy of Oh, Silly George, there's a sense of guardedness, alienation, unburied trauma ("Hate it here on match day anyway/Your mother's pulling out her fingernails"). Glimmers of Fools Gold (the title track) and cryptic Underworld communiqués (Deadman Deadman Deadman) deepen the murk, but *Hardly The Same Snake* demands you lean in, try to run these dots and dashes through the universal decoder.

Victoria Segal

Esben And The Witch

★★★

Hold Sacred

NOSTROMO. CD/DL/LP

Back to foreboding basics for Brighton trio's sixth LP.

Not ones to take the most practical option, south coast trio Esben And The Witch currently find themselves living in the UK, USA and Germany. They mapped out *Hold Sacred*'s songs in Rome and recorded them in Berlin. They still specialise in near-Nordic despair where Rachel Davies's deep, wounded vocals glide over Thomas Fisher and Daniel Copeman's brooding backdrops. It's sparse and stripped back, so the only instruments are keyboards and guitars, and with Copeman producing there's little outside input. Having moved towards a textured but more rocky sound of late, it's a return to their more ominous early days. The pace is funereal – they rarely vary it, although True Mirror fair thunders along – the lyrics often despairing (The Well peers into the depths of depression and Petals Of Ash muses upon the post-apocalypse) and the overall sense is one of foreboding.

John Aizlewood

Pere Ubu

★★★★

Trouble On Big Beat Street

CHERRY RED. CD/DL/LP

Cleveland institution still alive and kicking; 10 tracks on vinyl, 17 on CD.

Pere Ubu's debut *The Modern Dance* has just turned 45, a fearless, unique conflation of queasy garage rock and primitive electronics – so what can we reasonably expect from their nineteenth LP with only frontman David Thomas left among the founders? From the opening pair Love Is Like Gravity and Moss Covered Boondoggle in, *Trouble…* is thrillingly fresh: fractured and pulsing, gnarly and tender, whilst Thomas's cackle and warble is undiminished. There's also a sense of going full circle in Thomas and Andy Diagram's respective recreation of Allen Ravenstine's synthesizer static and saxophone trails. Worried Man Blues is another wayward travelogue that namechecks Robert Johnson, Pablo Picasso and Robert Zimmerman, while the joker in the pack, a cover of The Osmonds' Crazy Horses, sums up Thomas's singular temperament: one crazy horse snorting and stomping through Ubu's inspired scenes.

Martin Aston

Josh Ritter

★★★

Spectral Lines

THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Idaho-born songwriter and novelist's tenth studio LP.

A quietly impressionistic retreat from the politicised fare of 2019's Jason Isbell-produced *Fever Breaks*, Ritter's deeply personal latest is dedicated to his late mother, Sue. A gentle experimentalism blurs the edges of otherwise trad-sounding songs which explore the rudderless drift of grief (Horse No Rider), hope in karmic retribution (Someday), and love at first sight (see Sawgrass, which Ritter named synesthetically; its swaying melody "felt like the wind across scrub grass"). Elsewhere, the compressed lyricism Stephen King admired in Ritter's 2011 novel Bright's Passage is by now second nature on smouldering piano ballad Whatever Burns Will Burn, while Black Crown's unsettling evocation of depression and mania is deepened by a troubled-sounding lead guitar affray. *Spectral Lines* tries to come at hurt, loss and destiny afresh, with Ritter's dexterity with universal themes often paying dividends.

James McNair

Tiny Ruins

★★★★

Ceremony

MARATHON ARTISTS. CD/DL/LP

New Zealand folk singer goes extra-large on fourth album.

BEFORE NADIA Reid and Aldous Harding there was, and is, Tiny Ruins, AKA Hollie Fullbrook. Once a folk singer recorded so quiet and intimately that you could hear her licking her lips between words, Fullbrook has slowly gathered like-minded musicians around her to expand her sound, even going full-blown Kirsty MacColl folk pop on opening track Dogs Dreaming. Rich with naturalistic imagery – soaring birds, stranded sea life, wind-bent trees – the songs are rooted in Fullbrook's immediate environment on the edges of Auckland's Manukau Harbour, explored with her aforementioned dreaming dogs. Relationships with uncomfortable endings, uneasy attractions, and deep personal loss pepper Fullbrook's songs, but her Tiny Ruins bandmates consistently lift her into the light, creating warmth and depth rather than leaving the listener in endless gloom. It's a hard balance to pull off, but Tiny Ruins may have reached peak empathy with both each other and their audience.

Andy Fyfe

Tiny Ruins: Hollie Fullbrook (centre) is lifted into the light by her bandmates.

Frances Carter

Esther Rose

★★★

Safe To Run

NEW WEST. CD/DL/LP

Country Rose investigates new possibilities in relocation.

Raised in Michigan and based in New Orleans for three alt-country albums, Rose has moved to the high-plains calm of Santa Fe, New Mexico and her music's shifted too. Pedal steel still colours *Safe To Run* but so do fuzzier guitars; synthesizers are involved, and the tributaries are equally pop, folk and rock. In this, Rose mirrors the journey of Alynda Segarra (Hurray For The Riff Raff), who duets on the title track where Rose recognises the destination may not live up to its promise: "You know there's no place safe to run." Another heady/cautionary tale is Chet Baker "on the deck when the pills kick in", before the car crashes, though this memory hails from Rose's youth, and her priorities have changed too, singing of love drawing her to New Mexico, "searching for three chords and the truth".

Martin Aston

Ben Gregory
★★★★

Episode

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

Former Blaenavon singer's ambitious pop-prog debut.

Formed as 14-year-olds after they won a talent contest playing Muse's Knights Of Cydonia, Blaenavon abandoned such extremes for a more middling indie-pop. But their bipolar singer's emergence from psychiatric treatment to go solo has restored ambition, engineering a startling psychodrama, both spiritual and musical. The 11-minute Blue Sea Blue rivals Steven Wilson for machine-tooled prog but Gregory's lyrics avoid proggy tropes for plain honesty ("All the memories you can't stop/ When the ambulance took you away"); Deathbed Hangover's flurry of Blade Runner synths and needling guitar is quintessentially Muse, until a gentle piano coda, as if the panic attack has subsided. Smoke is the reverse: four minutes of folky serenity before Gregory is submerged in blurry sound, but still manages to impart good advice, via RuPaul's Drag Race: "If you can't love yourself/How you gonna love someone else?"

Martin Aston

Arborist
★★★★

An Endless Sequence Of Dead Zeros

KIRKINRIOLA. CD/DL/LP

Outstanding Americana from Belfast singer-songwriter.

After expanding his band to a five-piece for 2020's *A Northern View*, Arborist has again reverted to being essentially a solo vehicle for Mark McCambridge. This third LP is produced by Matthew E. White (Foxygen, Justin Vernon, Sharon Van Etten) at his Richmond, Virginia Spacebomb Studio with White's house band, creating an ensemble sound perfectly suited to Arborist's slightly lysergic vibe. Opening with Dreaming In Another Language, six-and-a-half minutes of deep and twisting Velvet Underground groove, McCambridge constantly changes gears: O Margaret, a love song to his mother, is gentle folk picking backed by sweeping strings; both One Morning, Mid-November and Dewdrop, Cherry Oak are tumbling echo chamber ballads; Black Halo spins off into a soul jam; Alabaster Skin closes the LP with a pillowy and mesmerising, Spiritualized-like soft landing. A brilliant exploration of just how inventive Americana can be.

Andy Fyfe

Pan Arcadia
★★★★

Pan Arcadia

PANARCADIAMUSIC. DL/LP

Debut dynamite from the rock'n'roll city that never quits.

"You say you still get satisfaction/ From that fast and easy action/I know I still get it too," singer Eamon Rush crows in Deja Vu, summing up the CBGB idealism shot forward in spiked-treble riffing and soaraway choruses on this New York sextet's first album. The precedents are loud and clear, The Strokes among them. So is the original flair. The pinpoint crossfire of Dylan Kelly and Gabe Gonzalez's guitars is closer to a minimalist Blue Öyster Cult. Drag It Out is like one of Blondie's darker confections revved up as hot-rod elegy, and trumpeter Jimmy Brewer is a refreshing wild card, riding shotgun like a one-man Memphis Horns. Rush may sing in a rusted yowl not far from that guy in The Strokes, but the urgency is his alone, busting through the napalm pop of Sorry I Was Late like it's a bar brawl in the Brill Building. Self-released and cut in a friend's living room, *Pan Arcadia* is the sound of New York rising – again.

David Fricke

Rose City Band
★★★★

Garden Party

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

Wooden Shjips' guitarist takes an Edenic trip.

There's a track on *Garden Party* called Porch Boogie, which sounds a little bit on the nose for a project as expansively laid-back as Rose City Band. If it is, however, it lands with butterfly grace: "Feel the sun/Break up the rain/Take a load off your bones /And dream free," sings guitarist and multi-instrumentalist Ripley Johnson, which is as much mission statement as generous invitation. Mixed by John McEntire, *Garden Party* is a golden-hour dream of a record, balmy keyboards and cicada-like percussion setting a perfect scene for the easy, receptive conversations between the guitars of Johnson and Barry Walker. There's a solar warmth that rises from these songs, the cosmic Giant Sand outreach of Chasing Rainbows or Mariposa's fluting fusion releasing their baked-in energy at perfect intervals, while El Rio is a delightful stream of consciousness. Here comes the sun, in its own sweet time.

Victoria Segal

Remembrance day: Angel Bat Dawid has made the record of her dreams.

Terrence Antonio James

Roll over Duke Ellington

...Tell Mary Lou Williams the news, Chicago jazz star's requiem has arrived. By **Ben Thompson.**

Angel Bat Dawid
★★★★

Requiem For Jazz

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

THE ALBUM trailed excitedly as "the record of my dreams" when Angel Bat Dawid spoke to MOJO in 2019 does indeed turn out to be a blockbuster. Taking her cues from dialogue and music in Edward O. Bland's once-obscure but now available on YouTube 1959 film The Cry Of Jazz, she delivers an infectiously enraged 24-track meditation on the origins, provenance and unlimited scope of the music which has always refused to be constrained within the four walls of the four-letter word, jazz.

Live recordings of the *Requiem*'s premiere – a performance of this 12-movement suite for 15-piece instrumental ensemble and four-strong choir which Dawid conducted at Chicago's Hyde Park Jazz Festival in 2019 – have been expanded by their composer/arranger with additional electronic beats, vocal interludes, and a climactic cameo from Sun Ra's cosmic inheritors Marshall Allen and Knoel Scott contributing to what is, by any standards, one hell of a director's cut. The music makes fearsome sense on its own, but a viewing of The Cry Of Jazz is recommended before listening – both as an experience in its own right, and as the context for what Angel Bat Dawid calls "a loving conversation that we need to have with each other".

Bland's remarkable half-hour film – exploring the connections between the balance of freedom and constraint in black American daily life and the history and structure of jazz – is framed by a dramatised debate between black jazz musicians and white jazz fans, a kind of Crimewatch reconstruction of cultural appropriation. The awkwardness of some of these exchanges may be of their time, but the underlying issues have lost none of their relevance more than 60 years later. A particular flashpoint is the question of jazz's black American specificity – "Not only did they create jazz, they were the only ones who could have created jazz" – and it's in making this case that the film's characters say the words which are Angel Bat Dawid's musical jumping-off points.

So the 12 stages of her sung liturgy are punctuated by a developing argument about the character and significance of jazz – Jazz Reflects The Improvised Life Thrust Upon The Negro... Because Jazz Is The One Element In American Life Where Whites Must Be Humble To The Negro, etc – and the challenge to which the music triumphantly rises is to be the physical embodiment of that point of view without the tail seeming to wag the dog. Stentorian and playful are the watchwords and Allen and Scott's *deus ex machina* appearance at the end ("Sun Ra, thank you for being here today") is a true mike drop moment in that connection: "This music isn't notes on a page, this is how we've been surviving."

ANGEL BAT DAWID
REQUIEM FOR JAZZ

Deep and mature: Rickie Lee Jones, Coolsville incarnate.

Astor Morgan

All that jazz

An American standard sings American Standards. **Sylvie Simmons** listens.

Rickie Lee Jones

★★★★

Pieces Of Treasure

BMG MODERN. CD/DL/LP

RICKIE LEE JONES PIECES OF TREASURE
The Duchess of Coolsville
Produced by Russ Titelman

IF YOU GOOGLE "female jazz singers" you won't find Rickie Lee Jones. She tried it and came up blank, but she considers herself a jazz singer. She grew up on jazz and the American Standards – her grandparents were in vaudeville; her dad played jazz – and when she first went on-stage in LA in the '70s it was largely jazz ballads she sang. The songs on her first album, *Rickie Lee Jones* (1979), were also, in her mind, rooted in jazz. The album was a huge hit and won her the Best New Artist Grammy. She was also nominated for Best Vocal Performance – but for pop, not jazz. The cool singer with the red beret and inter-genre songs was being reshaped into the poster girl for commercially successful boho rock.

There's a reason for bringing up Jones's past: she's been revisiting it a lot lately, with her 2021 memoir Last Chance Texaco, then with the TV screenplay she's writing, based on her early career. She was thinking about recording an album with Russ Titelman, who produced her first album and the follow-up *Pirates* (1981), widely considered her masterwork and also the inspiration for this album's title. But there's no new Jones originals on *Pieces Of Treasure*. It's a covers album of jazz songs from the Great American Songbook. She'd had enough of being ignored by the jazz world; it was time, she said, to make her mark.

There are 10 songs here, most of them slow, with a smoky nightclub intimacy that makes it a great late-night album. Titelman's production is spot-on. So are the musicians: the vibraphone solo that opens Just In Time; the perfectly simple piano and lovely strings on All The Way; the evocative Spanish guitar at the start of Nature Boy, one of her dad's favourites; the bass and finger-popping on the cheeriest cut, They Can't Take That Away From Me. Jones's voice is lovely throughout, with a big range as well as personality. It's high and youthful on a surprisingly slow, pensive Sunny Side Of The Street; deeper, more mature on Here's That Rainy Day; and on September Song it's both, a dash of Marianne Faithfull at the beginning and Billie Holiday later on.

You get the impression of someone looking back over a distant past, but also of a young girl trying on old clothes she found rummaging through her parents' wardrobe. The cover photo seems to favour the latter: an unused pic from the first photo session she ever did, wearing California Highway Patrol sunglasses and 1940s bathing suit. She was the Duchess of Coolsville, and as this album shows, still is.

Bill Orcutt

★★★★

Jump On It

PALILALIA. CD/DL/LP

Avant-guitar magus airs his delicates.

From John Fahey on, there's been a long tradition of ornery American guitar soli; wilful outsiders who use the tools of folk to create a more radical kind of music. Few have embodied that impulse more vigorously in recent years than Bill Orcutt, a veteran of '90s noise-rockers Harry Pussy, whose thorny improvisations have often veered towards the string-snapping violence of Derek Bailey. After the Glenn Branca-ish modal crunch of last year's *Music For Four Guitars*, this ninth solo album comes as a gentle surprise: 10 brief études for acoustic guitar that feel composed on the spot, foregrounding the grace and lyricism sometimes overwhelmed by Orcutt's forbidding virtuosity. At times, on a track like New Germs, it plays like a seductive rethink of Segovia, but the beauty of *Jump On It* also lies in how it evolves Orcutt's music rather than compromises it. Start here and work backwards.

John Mulvey

All Hands Make Light

★★★★

Darling The Dawn

CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP

Drone and melody combine effortlessly on debut from Montréal duo Ariel Engle and Efrim Manuel Menuck.

Born from remote file-swapping and inspired by ancestor music, Montréal indie scenesters Ariel Engle (also known as La Force) and Godspeed! instrumentalist Efrim Manuel Menuck have clearly found catharsis in collaboration. Bookended by tracks from 2021's self-titled cassette EP, stately-paced highlights We Live On A Fucking Planet And Baby That's The Sun and The Sons And Daughters Of Poor Eternal find Menuck building walls of sound from banks of modular synths, found sounds and feedback loops, intersected by the almost madrigal quality of Engle's crystalline voice. A bespoke zone where dark ambient meets the ethereal and old folk melodies shake hands with This Mortal Coil, its hymnal lullabies slowly tug at the senses, dissonance dissolving into beauty with a pulsing human heart.

Andy Cowan

Whatitdo Archive Group

★★★★

Palace Of A Thousand Sounds

RECORD KICKS. CD/DL/LP

From the tiki jungle to the freeway to the boudoir, 360 degrees of listening pleasure.

Like many a great night out at the flicks, it starts with a gong. Following 2021's spoof spaghetti western soundtrack debut *The Black Stone Affair*, this Reno, Nevada band headed by writer/producer Alexander Korostinsky add a 25-piece orchestra and choir including harp, vibraphone, and marimba for an even more widescreen listening experience. As well as vintage soundtracks, the crates they're digging here most deeply for inspiration are labelled 1950s and '60s exotica – Les Baxter, Esquivel, Martin Denny, Tak Shindo and Lalo Schifrin. With fitting song titles – The Cashmere Chamber; Beyond The Crimson Veil – the kitsch and the tunes invade your brain so groovily, often with a tough suspense thriller undercurrent, that this album arguably surpasses its bachelor pad roots in 360-degree high-fidelity listening pleasure. Khruangbin fans questing for kindred spirits need look no further.

Mat Snow

Lounge lizards: Whatitdo Archive Group.

Elena Stanton

Galen & Paul

★★★

Can We Do Tomorrow Another Day?

SONY MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

He of The Clash, she the singer-songwriter daughter of Kevin Ayers.

Taking an 18-month painting break in Mallorca, Paul Simonon also sketched a few songs. Back in London, he and France-born, Spain-raised Galen Ayers fleshed those songs out for their first collaboration. It's not quite as ad hoc as its genesis and the sweet-natured tone suggests. Tony Visconti produces, the band includes The Verve's Simon Tong, Big Audio Dynamite's Dan Donovan and Polar Bear drummer Sebastian Rochford, while Damon Albarn adds melodica. With a light touch akin to She & Him and nods to French chanson, a less sexually charged Jane Birkin & Serge Gainsbourg and summery Europop, Ayers is a lovely singer in both English and Spanish; he rather less so on the London homage It's Another Night or the gently barbed I've Never Had A Good Time… In Paris. When they harmonise on Room At The Top, though, they're a joy.

John Aizlewood

Nausia

★★★★

Good Intentions

PLUG. DL/LP

Young Danes chase the Trane with post-rock invention.

Live, at a festival in Aarhus last spring, this Copenhagen quintet were an exhilarating surprise: saxophonists Oskar Faye and Isak Schiødt combining eccentric yet devoutly melodic composition with Christoffer Beese's drone waves of guitar and a bass-and-drums hypnosis like Ornette Coleman's Prime Time stripped to the minimum of Neu!. *Good Intentions*, the follow-up to Nausia's homespun 2020 LP *Prince Kiosk*, is at once a dynamic and haunted advance, cycles of circular-Coltrane suspense and free-rock tensions that at times suggest Mogwai with reeds on the ESP-Disk label. Tidligt Mørkt ("Early Dark") is a stately march through curtains of distortion, the saxes carrying the grief and poise of a New Orleans funeral procession. ZUG is more upbeat trance: a whirling lick – like Ornette blowing a Philip Glass motif – disrupted by a Who-ish bridge, then swinging into grooving tumult. Additional brass heightens the ascension in Celebration Song, reiterating the jazz at the centre of this band's spirited ambition.

David Fricke

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN

deVon Russell Gray, Nathan Hanson, Davu Seru

★★★★

We Sick

INNOVA. CD/DL

A trio of powerhouse improvisers' moving response to the murder of George Floyd.

Recorded in a church in Minneapolis, just a few weeks after George Floyd's death in 2020, these six poignant improvisations splutter and crackle with unprocessed grief. While opener Letters witnesses its authors staking each other out – Russell Gray's spare piano runs haunt the margins as Seru's controlled percussive pitter-patter works the gaps – the sombre, deeper rhythm of They Stay Breathing Here and fragmented schemata of Solve For Malcolm's two acts allow the fierce pealing tones of Nathan Hanson's tenor and soprano saxes to howl, rage and weep with profound force. As with the Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Matthew Shipp or Muhal Richard Abrams, it's further proof abstract jazz can deliver a real emotional punch, finding beauty and connection amid the darkest of lows.

ALSO RELEASED

Asher Gamedze

★★★★

Turbulence And Pulse

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. DL/LP

Largely written on piano, Cape Town drummer Gamedze refines 2020's debut *Dialectic Soul*'s persuasive blend of free jazz, protest and academia, with saxophonist Buddy Wells and trumpeter Robin Fassie consistently drawing out joyful melodies from intense melancholia-patterned beats. An engaging quest for satori, it closes with three outstanding live takes from Cairo that highlight the fluidity of Gamedze's compositions.

Alfa Mist

★★★★

Variables

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

A self-taught pianist who discovered jazz via deconstructed hip-hop samples, this East Ender's precise fifth outing takes in cool vocal turns from bassist Kaya Thomas-Dyke (Aged Eyes) and South African folk singer Bongeziwe Mabandla (Apho). Longer instrumentals The Gist and the ensemble-led title track finesse Mist's introspective yet propulsive style: endlessly looping piano melodies and lilting Rhodes married to intuitive boom-bap rhythms. The cumulative effect is lulling and hypnotic.

The Vampires feat. Chris Abrahams

★★★★

Nightjar

EARSHIFT. CD/DL/LP

The Australian quartet hook up with The Necks' pianist on album seven, Abrahams blending seamlessly into songwriters Jeremy Rose and Nick Garbett's spacious harmonies and complementary lines (even slyly referencing The Necks' The World At War on Khan Shatyr). His elegant, levitating phrases enhance the slow serenade of High Plains and sleepy, incantatory Sun Gazers, two of their most gently insidious compositions to date.

Sultan Stevenson

★★★★

Faithful One

WHIRLWIND RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Another Tomorrow's Warriors graduate, this Londoner's debut marries explicit spirituality with a quiet but intense personality. Stevenson's trick for building around a simple motif echoes McCoy Tyner and Esbjörn Svensson, the meditative interplays of Prayer and unflashy soloing of To Be Seen held tight by Jacob Gryn's walking bass lines and Joel Waters' understated drums. Elsewhere, saxophonist Denys Baptiste adds trademark zeal to the upfront title track. *AC*

Angelica Rockne: in full bloom.

Angelica Rockne

★★★★

The Rose Society

LOOSE/FLUFF & GRAVY. CD/DL/LP

Baroque Americana from the orchards of Corralitos, Santa Cruz.

PORTLAND, OREGON's Fluff & Gravy label has proved a quietly excellent pipeline for Americana this past couple of years and, after picking up Margo Cilker's terrific *Pohoryllе* for UK release in 2021, Loose have grabbed another gem from them here. Rockne comes from northern California and, on her second album, generally lets things unravel at a stately pace. All stealth, organ simmer and discreet programmed strings, The Undoing is a kind of country-tinged torch song, while the exceptional Protection, Prayers And Vigilance adds blurry electric guitar, and a hitherto restrained psychedelic dimension, to the slow-burn. There's a touch of Emmylou Harris to Rockne's gravitas and trills, and also something less rootsy, more ethereal and soulful. A bigger budget might have amped up the grandeur, fleshed out the fine songs with authentic string sections, but it might also have lost some of the otherness that makes *The Rose Society* a real find.

John Mulvey

Kory Thibeault

Nabihah Iqbal

★★★

Dreamer

NINJA TUNE. CD/DL/LP

London singer's reflective second is a deep fantasia of shoegaze and dream-pop.

Nabihah Iqbal is quite the polymath. Since 2017 debut *Weighing Of The Heart*, she's collaborated with Zhang Ding and Wolfgang Tillmans, but also lost its follow-up to studio burglars, starting *Dreamer* afresh in Pakistan, writing on acoustic guitar and harmonium. Not that you can tell. Most of its layered, ornate creations and moody conjurings emerge from a deep shoegaze rabbit hole redolent of Slowdive and Lush, their chiming guitars, plush bass lines, shimmering loops and waves of fat '80s synths coursing with undefined melancholy. And while the jaunty leads of This World Couldn't See Us click into New Order-ish grooves, Iqbal's battered diaristic revelations on Sweet Emotion and Closer Lover embrace pop as escapism with emotional heft.

Andy Cowan

Mega Bog

★★★★

End Of Everything

MEXICAN SUMMER. CD/DL/LP

A new phase in life and music; co-produced with Big Thief's James Krivchenia.

Erin Birgy says the painting on the cover of her seventh album as Mega Bog symbolises the opposite poles of "hopelessness and power." Similarly bold, the first of Birgy's albums written on keyboards rather than guitar forsakes her previous musical impressionism to embrace dramatic synth-pop with a soul edge. Now based between Athens (Greece) and Los Angeles, Mega Bog's most linear album so far is co-produced by Big Thief's James Krivchenia, who also plays drums. Despite the directness, Birgy's voice remains malleable – swooping, conversational, whispering, declamatory. The lyrics are seemingly about the reframing of her life after embracing sobriety. It closes with the downbeat title track, perhaps a goodbye to the past. *End Of Everything*'s surface gloss barely conceals a raw intensity.

Kieron Tyler

Gia Margaret

★★★★

Romantic Piano

JAGJAGUWAR. DL/LP

Exploring what Germans call *waldeinsamkeit* – contented aloneness in the forest.

Chicago native and classically trained pianist Gia Margaret's deepening bond with ambient, mostly instrumental composition was part-born of pragmatism after illness while touring 2018's *There's Always Glimmer* left her unable to sing. Here tapping Erik Satie and lesser-known pianistic influences, including Ethiopian nun Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou, she weaves birdsong, cicada chirrups, scrunchy footsteps and backwards-recorded instrument swells into her impressionistic piano sketches, creating a comfortingly creaky, often delicate mood that's occasionally laced with a not unpleasant melancholy. Adept with found-sound collage (Ways Of Seeing; 2017) and more traditional-sounding classical composition (A Stretch), Margaret's touch is especially deft on Juno, a kind of ambient fermata which evokes the slow elongation of a tap-drip before it drops. It's playful of *Romantic Piano*'s title to feint at Richard Clayderman, but this is searching, quietly profound stuff.

James McNair

Lael Neale

★★★★

Star Eaters Delight

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

Virginia farm-raised songwriter's third album.

The first 40 seconds of *Star Eaters Delight*'s opener I Am The River are extraordinary: a hint of Joe Jackson's shuffling Steppin' Out introduction; pumping, minimalist Krautrock bass; some Autobahn-style Omnichord; then wordless "pah-pah-pah" vocals easing into the killer line, "I am a river, I carry men down". It's no fluke either. Now living and creating at her parents' farm after returning from a Los Angeles sojourn, Lael Neale is little bit Nico, a little bit Mazzy Star's Hope Sandoval, but she never sheds her pulsating undertow. She's almost hymnal on If I Had No Wings, while the snail-paced closer Lead Me Blind is gorgeously glacial. But the album's standout is the simmering, hook-laden near-nine minute In Verona, which re-drafts the Montague/Capulet rivalry for the 21st century. Neale is imaginative, but she's steeped in songwriting craft and she knows her way round a whopping chorus. That's more than enough.

John Aizlewood

Eloise

★★★★

Drunk On A Flight

AWAL. DL/LP

Bubbling-under Brit singer-songwriter unleashes fully-fledged talent.

Beguiling from the outset: the title track opens on muted airport sounds, then a woozy melody eases in, a slow soul groove with piano and laid-back guitar that you wouldn't take for a break-up song. The vocal's unexpected too, its molten intimacy mixing Blossom Dearie with Curtis Mayfield's falsetto. With this second album, Eloise Alexandra Lamb has moved from pop ballad tales of first love to feisty, occasionally caustic adult frankness – Forgive You is articulate jazz-folk, breezy and bittersweet as Joni Mitchell's *Court And Spark*, though sung with a soft London husk. Midpoint, things seem a touch samey with just too much heartbreak – but then we get Vanilla Tobacco, sly, smoky and full of raunch ("You clench your jaw when you catch my eye…"), and Tired Now, a blissfully sweet closer; and this time, the girl walks away.

Glyn Brown

The Lemon Twigs

★★★★

Everything Harmony

CAPTURED TRACKS. CD/DL/LP

Long Island siblings ponder loneliness, defeat and loved ones' Alzheimer's.

Art imitated life when former child actors Brian & Michael D'Addario spent 2019 filming/writing songs for a since-shelved TV show about an imaginary '70s brother band, but this reflective, Simon & Garfunkel, Arthur Russell and Big Star-influenced album is the real meat of their three-year absence. Its more disconsolate chamber-pop moments make exquisite use of vibraphone, harpsichord and French horn, but magnificent powerpop interludes In My Head and What You Were Doing act as palate cleansers on an album we're told exudes a "palpable mood of defeat." Fortunately, the melancholy is beautiful, particularly so on poised ballad I Don't Belong To Me, quite conceivably influenced by the D'Addario's recent session work for Weyes Blood. *Everything Harmony* is certainly a darker chapter in the Twigs' story, but their songwriting has become more nuanced.

James McNair

White Label
Other Voices

White Label

★★★★

Other Voices

69 BLUEBIRD. CD/DL/LP

Bootleg chill-pop remixers go legit. The *'Voices'* include Paul Weller and Linda Lewis.

Twelve years on from their *Stolen Voices* LP, where David Bowie, John Lennon and Billie Holiday 'starred', the Scots-in-London duo of Anth Brown and MOJO writer Tom Doyle here (mostly!) top off their down- tempo blend of retro-futurist soundscaping with self-commissioned vocal firepower. The *'Other'* warblers include Weller, whose phased celestial wonderings float over The Sea's Out At Night, and Bim Sherman's FX-drenched croon on Do You Believe?, a track first initiated almost a quarter-century ago, shortly before the On-U Sound rootsman's passing. However, with '70s Essex singer-songwriter Lewis joined by angelic newcomer Syann (on four cuts) and Glasgow's Jill O'Sullivan (AKA Lorean) on three, this debut predominantly recalls '90s chill-out like Air and One Dove, or Saint Etienne at their most horizontal. Splashes of 'real' instrumentation (electric twang, acoustic picking, piano) enhance a sense of humanity, making *Other Voices* a gently soulful option for the wee small hours.

Andrew Perry

Fenne Lily

★★★★

Big Picture

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP/MC

The British expat has love here on her third LP – if she can keep it.

Is it harder to hold onto something dear when you don't have space to let go? Capturing the assorted intimacies of love lived through the early stages of lockdown, *Big Picture* is a vivid and aching snapshot of trying to keep the world from getting the best of something good. "I was in the business of letting go," Fenne Lily coos at the start of Superglued, soft guitar strings tracing her slow lilt. "Then you came around and put me out of the job/And my misery." That is a loaded gambit, Lily waltzing along the fine line between joy and, well, death. *Big Picture* maintains that balance for 10 elegantly rendered tracks, uncovering an intersection of The Clientele and Waxahatchee. Frisson aplenty supplied by her impervious cool and Joe Sherrin's radiant guitar, Lily's best work yet invites you into her newly crowded space to hear some stories – with a wince, maybe, but never a flinch.

Grayson Haver Currin

Mad Professor Meets Channel One Sound System

★★★★

Round Two

ARIWA. CD/DL/LP

Second studio clash between UK dub stalwarts.

Mad Professor
Channel One

An important force in the UK sound-system scene since the late '70s, London's Channel One Sound System are longstanding favourites of the Notting Hill Carnival and festival headliners worldwide. Their most recent music productions have been made at Darren Mathers' Jamtone studios, and this second volume of a clash series against dub supremo Mad Professor sees Mathers mix dubs of tracks by Sun I Tafari and Sister Nya, while Prof dubs down tracks by Sister Aisha and some of his forthcoming Mutabaruka LP. Both sides are delivered tastefully, Mad Professor dropping in some trademark warbler on Spirit Of The Revolution and animal noises on Amina Fire, while Mathers works in sound-system siren screeches on Natty Dub and master tape rewinds on Control Dub. Atmospheric and engaging, this is another fine listening experience from two dub greats.

David Katz

Harry Taussig

★★★★

80

TOMPKINS SQUARE. DL

The fingerstyle magus fuses his folk and classical pasts.

Harry Taussig was never in a hurry. After cutting two coveted early grails of American fingerstyle guitar in the mid '60s, Taussig mostly vanished from that nebulous scene, studying biophysics and becoming a visual artist and part-time guitar instructor. But since Tompkins Square reissued his debut almost two decades ago, he's been on a relative tear, quadrupling his recorded output. Made as he entered his ninth decade, *80* might be his most playful and riveting work, as he routes the popping strings and ringing notes of folk vitality through a series of vibrating études and wistful melodies. The best work here – G Minor #3 and the second of two takes on his Étude In D Flat Major – ride the divide between lugubrious and luminous, notes sparkling within songs that offer existential shrugs or tired smiles. And his surprising banjo turn here is a slow wonder, repeatedly flirting with darkness only to flick it away again.

Grayson Haver Currin

LA Priest

★★★★

False Luna

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Former nu-raver makes beguiling tropical-pop.

Formerly frontman of nu-ravers Late Of The Pier, Sam Eastgate's vision quest continues. His last LP, *Gene*, saw him build his own drum machine to evoke the delirious perfectionism of solo Lindsey Buckingham. His third veers in a new direction, recorded while travelling through Mexico and Costa Rica, and composed solely from minimal drum parts by local musician Carlos Gabriel Favela Manzano and Eastgate's multi-tracked guitars and vocals. The tropical vibe and treated guitar charm throughout, while Eastgate's croon, located somewhere between early Bolan and Jeff Buckley at his most spiritual, is beguiling. His true gift, however, lies in arranging these meditative melodic lines into compelling songs: the seductive likes of Star and Sail On seem to materialise by magic. A loose, hazy treat, *False Luna* is evidence of an eccentric talent locating his true voice.

Stevie Chick

Rodney Crowell

★★★★

The Chicago Sessions

NEW WEST. CD/DL/LP

Teaming with Jeff Tweedy, the alt-country fount has rarely sounded so easy-going.

At 72, Rodney Crowell has nothing to prove. A coveted Nashville songwriter who has, at turns, been an ace sideman, striking duet partner, and empathetic collaborator, he long ago crossed his own dozen-album threshold, his best work delivering experiential wisdom through expert turns of phrase. Yet here's Crowell, teaming not only with Jeff (and, sometimes, Spencer) Tweedy but also flitting between country shuffles, punchy piano-pop, and humanist hymns. Less than a minute in, he sings playfully of his "misspent youth, cold and empty as a payphone booth", a gambit that sets up an unfolding quilt of redemptive comforts. He's the heretic radical on Somebody Loves You, the smitten husband on Oh Miss Claudia, the reverent student covering Townes, and the former wildman grateful to have endured so much throughout. Beneath Tweedy's twinkling lights, Crowell wears each look like a favourite old coat – familiar, easy, and pocked by stains and rips that remind him of all he's seen.

Grayson Haver Currin

Shirley Collins

★★★★

Archangel Hill

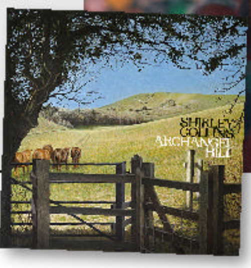
DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Sussex folk hero hits another peak.

NAMED AFTER Mount Caburn, a hill not far from her home in Lewes, East Sussex, the third album since the folk Grand Dame's unexpected 2016 return tours a number of significant personal landmarks. Collins's oak-toned, 87-year-old voice re-engages with some traditional songs she first recorded in the '60s and '70s (Hares On The Mountain and a twinkly Fare Thee Well My Dearest Dear) while long-term collaborator Pip Barnes weaves her memories of song-collecting in the States into the buoyant High And Away. A 1980 rendition of Hand And Heart (based on a poem written by Collins' uncle) is a reminder of the hurricane force of her voice in times past, but with its own low-key sparkle *Archangel Hill* stands testament to a musical third act every bit as engaging as anything that went before.

Jim Wirth

Shirley Collins: onwards and upwards.



Grant Gee

Susanne Sundfør: daring to dream.

Janne Rugland

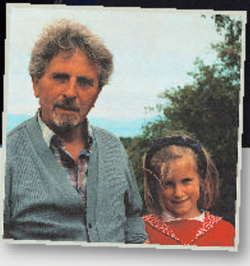
Susanne Sundfør

★★★★

Blómi

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Her sixth studio album's title is Norse for 'in bloom'.



WITH HER top-tier voice of grace and power, Norwegian singer-songwriter/composer Susanne Sundfør has explored folk, electronic-pop, and synthesized classical realms (see 2013's *A Night At Salle Pleyel*) with artful surety. This writer came to her via brilliant, ever-evolving 2012 single White Foxes, but *Blómi* is something else again. A joyous celebration of, among other things, new motherhood and her grandfather Kjell Aartun's achievements as a linguist, it's a thematically and musically complex record that encourages wonderment; birdsong imbued, percussion-driven track Leikara Ljóð camping somewhere between Kate Bush's Aerial Tal and Dave Brubeck's Unsquare Dance, and Ashera's Song building to an exquisite arrangement of seismic beauty. Bookended by spoken-word meditations on black holes and the human heart, *Blómi* dares to dream and shuns convention. Sundfør has become to Norway what Björk is to Iceland.

James McNair

Temples

★★★

Exotico

ATO. CD/DL/LP/MC

Kettering psych-poppers' fourth album looks East for inspiration.

After three LPs on a hi-tech 'Zombies go West Coast' tip, James Bagshaw's Midlands crew return with a more Eastward-inclined vibe, incorporating the scales and galloping beats of Turkish psych into their crisply contemporary sound. After autumn 2019's *Hot Motion* campaign was unforeseeably curtailed, Temples apparently viewed this indeed exotic development as an imaginative escape from grim, earthly realities. Accordingly, *Exotico* feels liberated of a certain uptightness: Crystal Hall and Cicada launch on a zither lick transposed to scorching electric guitar (plus synth), with that Anatolian flavour carrying over into keening vocals. Recording unfolded in upstate New York with Sean Ono Lennon, and, on the mix, Flaming Lips avatar Dave Fridmann, yielding a sound at once ancient and modern, encapsulated by Meet Your Maker's ace balance of hurtling snake-charmer groove and acid 303 squiggle. The album's second half-hour wilts, but the first is Temples excelling as never before.

Andrew Perry

Natural Information Society

★★★★

Since Time Is Gravity

EREMITE. DL

Chicago drone-jazz titans get bigger, even better.

Aficionados of transcendental music often have to choose between spiritual jazz and minimalist drone for their perfect hit, but the records of Joshua Abrams and his Natural Information Society essentially unite the best of both worlds and throw in some Gnawan trance for good measure.

As with the previous six NIS albums, *Since Time Is Gravity* is rooted in the north African three-string bass pulse of Abrams' guimbri, and the seesawing hum of Lisa Alvarado's harmonium.

This time, though, the group is expanded to include a six-piece horn section and harpist, adding a modal big band dimension; think Coltrane's *Africa/Brass*. MVP is Chicago vet Ari Brown on tenor, swinging out of the rhythmic grid on Is. But it's Stigmergy, named after a concept of collective action, that best encapsulates the ecstatic NIS groupthink: one hypnotic soloist after another – Ben Lamar Gay, brilliant on cornet – drifting elegantly in and out of systems repetition.

John Mulvey

Graham Nash

★★★

Now

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Seventh solo album, the first album in seven years with all new material.

According to Graham Nash, *Now* is "the most personal [album] I've ever made," which seems curious given the intimacy of his previous solo record, 2016's *This Path Tonight*, with its spare, honest songs about separating from his wife – and David Crosby. These 13 songs – one a short-but-sweet orchestral piece written by Nash's old friend Alan Price (Theme From Pastorale) – were recorded with a band that includes longtime collaborators Shane Fontayne and Todd Caldwell. Lyrically, the subjects for the most part concern his new love (opener Right Now; sweet, simple Follow Your Heart), as well as changing the world (A Better Life) and changing himself (tender piano-accompanied When It Comes To You). Musically, these songs evoke different parts of Nash's musical past, from classic pop (Buddy's Back) to CSNY – in particular the mournful Neil Young-esque harmonica on Love Of Mine, and more generally any number of songs where it's really hard not to feel the absence of David Crosby's harmonies.

Sylvie Simmons

Index For Working Musik

★★★

Dragging The Needlework For The Kids At Uphole

TOUGH LOVE. CD/DL/LP

East London alt-rock's answer to Skip Spence's *Oar*.

INDEX
FOR
WORKING
MUSIK

Initially convened in the ranks of baleful indie-popsters The Proper Ornaments, IFWM evolved out of sometime Toy keys/organist Max Oscarnold working on soundtrack music for bassist Nathalia Bruno's art movies. With three further instrumentalists corralled into a windowless east London basement, the core pairing created a soundworld even more downbeat and limelight-averse than the 'main' band's, with Oscarnold's vocals murmured and often unnervingly indistinct (see Railroad Bulls; Chains), and the surrounding music just about on the right side of collapse. If spiritually adjacent to Skip Spence's out-of-focus late-'60s classic *Oar*, Index often aurally conjure the clanging and droning of early-'90s alt-guitar legends Pavement and My Bloody Valentine, sometimes topped with doubly disorientating loops, while the acoustic-strumming Narco Myths imagines Fat White Family fronted by a scabrous Leonard Cohen (without the golden voice!). Though elusive, *Dragging…* worms into your affections with a toxic allure.

Andrew Perry

Taj Mahal

★★★★

Savoy

STONY PLAN. CD/DL/LP

Octogenarian bluesman pays fine tribute to the swing era.

Taj Mahal
SAVOY

Taj Mahal's parents met at the Savoy ballroom in Harlem during the initial run of a teenage Ella Fitzgerald with the Chick Webb Band in 1938. He tells us this in the introduction to his evocative reading of Stompin' At The Savoy, the opening track on this album of big band classics. While other artists in their twilight years have failed to engage on similar projects, this is an absolute joy; the 14 songs taking on additional meaning when overlaid with his own storyline. Taj Mahal's speaking voice is very much like his singing voice – rich, gravelly, not unlike Satchmo's – and his scat is also lively and engaging. Producer/pianist John Simon helms the band, and they swing idiomatically throughout – their take on Caldonia (made famous by Louis Jordan) is wild. The only misstep comes with reviving Baby, It's Cold Outside.

Lois Wilson

Billy Reeves

★★★★

Nostalgia Of The Future

LAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW. CD/DL/LP

theaudience leader's long-gestated solo debut.

Since he helped launch Sophie Ellis-Bextor's career with theaudience, Billy Reeves's own ride has been distinctly rollercoaster. Along the way, he broadcast about football and travel for the BBC and almost died following a horrific car crash in 2001, but his most recent band, The Helicopter Of The Holy Ghost, was derailed when singer (and former Bluetone) Mark Morriss was accused of spousal abuse. Properly solo after almost 30 years on an album where Justin Hawkins guests, Reeves is as heartfelt as he is wry. He covers Golden Days, a stomper from Hard-Fi's Richard Archer's Soap project, and Finnish chanteuse Astrid Swan's lonesome Drift, but he shines brightest on his own material. Anthony Newley meets The Auteurs on Enfield Running, while Scorned, which reminds us that "hell hath no fury like a mediocre white guy scorned".

John Aizlewood

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Arlo Parks

★★★

My Soft Machine

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP/MC

Award-winning UK R&B star's second full-length lacks bite.

Hammersmith-born Arlo Parks' proprietary blend of lyrical candour and inventive, soft-focus R&B saw her 2021 debut *Collapsed In Sunbeams* win BRIT and Mercury awards, along with Grammy nominations. This follow-up doesn't alter the formula much – indeed, a sonic samey-ness pervades, with Parks' expertly arranged harmonies sometimes wasted on unworthy, unimaginative melodies. Similarly, when her dreamy sound is allied to somewhat insipid lyrics – like on Dog Rose, a mooning ballad that finds Parks sighing "I wanna belong to you" – she sounds like she's on autopilot. It's frustrating, because elsewhere, when Parks pairs millennial therapy-speak with stinging, confessional insight – Puppy's resigned observation that "some things hurt for ever"; Bruiseless's moving mediation on fleeting youthful innocence and her wish that "my eyes were still wide" – the results are resonant. But the truth is, too much of *My Soft Machine* is too smooth by half.

Stevie Chick

Island Of Love

★★★

Island Of Love

THIRD MAN. CD/DL/LP/MC

Third Man Records' first UK signatories bring the noise-pop.

Island of love

Rising from the same DIY punk scene as Chubby & The Gang, this young London quartet take their cues less from foursquare hardcore than the melodic amps-on-11 sound of Dinosaur Jr, whose sloppy MO was writ large on last year's raucous Songs Of Love EP. With a pair of songwriting singer-guitarists in Karim Newble and Linus Munch, these arrivistes offer two J Mascises for the price of one. In the twin-guitar tumble of this full-length debut's opener Big Whale, IOL certainly nail their heroes' unpredictability, as the track's latter half wrong-footingly proceeds at half pace, while further on, Weekend At Clive's interpolates a minute's reflective folky picking. At best, Fed Rock thrillingly bursts into Thin Lizzy-style duel-guitar soloing, while Grow/Blues 200 packs an album's worth of over-amplified melody into four-plus minutes. The rest is just too all over the place, but with honing, there's a classic long-player in these promising young pups.

Andrew Perry

Alison Goldfrapp

★★★★

The Love Invention

SKINT. CD/DL/LP

For her solo debut Goldfrapp delves into future disco.

The electroclash pop of Goldfrapp's last album, *Silver Eye* (2017), and a shimmering track with Röyksopp on their 2021 record *Profound Mysteries*, has led Alison Goldfrapp deeper into dancefloor grooves for her solo album. Relishing this new direction, Goldfrapp immerses her voice in sensual, slinky disco and elastic bass lines. Her lyrics are impressionistic, touching on themes of radical fantasy and robotic AI avatars: "Do you know how stars were made?/ Yeah you know how to radiate," she whispers over the glorious beat of So Hard So Hot, while on Subterfuge, her vocals are looped into an ambient cocoon. Multiple collaborators here include Claptone, Paul Woolford, and synth-pop songwriter Richard X, with Goldfrapp steering the cosmic ship through Balearic house and pulsating sub-bass. Apart from the more lightweight yearning of In Electric Blue, each track on this album takes you further into her brave new world.

Lucy O'Brien

Alison Goldfrapp: the heat is on.

Glen Matlock

★★★★

Consequences Coming

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

Sex Pistols bassist's politically charged renaissance.

CONSEQUENCES COMING
GLEN MATLOCK

Circa '76, you would've got long odds on Matlock, the shy little Mod who wrote the tunes, emerging 47 years later as the only Pistol burning with revolutionary ire. "I just can't let this go 'til there's someone's head on a stick," runs the feral chorus on this sixth solo venture's opener. Echoing his righteous tirade in a BBC Breakfast TV interview that went viral recently, its lyrics lambast Brexit and Britain's concomitant political evils, bringing a focused urgency to its downward-spiralling riffage hitherto absent from his latterday records. After much gigging, often flanked by Bowie's mid-'70s guitarist Earl Slick, Matlock at 66 is a punk icon reborn, penning his strongest songs in years, his so-so voice amped up to a withering croon (on the scathing Speaking In Tongues, he's a spit for Subway Sect's Vic Godard). Loose, swaggering, old-school-rocking to the core, *Consequences Coming* hits the target, hard.

Andrew Perry

Modern Cosmology

★★★

What Will You Grow Now?

DUOPHONIC UHF DISCS. CD/DL/LP

Stereolab singer's Brazil-based collaboration bears intriguing fruit.

MODERN COSMOLOGY

"In the dirt, little worm/ Squirming in the dirt/What are you going to grow?" sings Laetitia Sadier on this album's sinisterly glitchy samba. The answer lies in this meeting of jittery minds, an earthy collaboration between the Stereolab frontwoman and Brazilian five-piece band Mombojo that was initiated back in 2016. *What Will You Grow Now?* is committed to cross-pollination, or as Sadier puts it over the gently psychedelic keyboard ripples of Making Something, "the search for connection". As ever, Sadier's lyrics take up intriguing positions on everything from the patriarchy (the frayed-edge Cate Le Bon post-rock of Trauma Release Makes Free) to true liberation (A Time To Blossom's creamy space-rock fusions). The tension between philosophical lyrics and the invitingly cosmic fractals generated by the band can hit awkwardly, but this is a striking new shoot.

Victoria Segal

ELECTRONICA

BY STEPHEN WORTHY

Clark

★★★★

Sus Dog

THROTTLE. CD/DL/LP

Unswerving electronic pacesetter produced by Thom Yorke; inspired by The Beach Boys.

As Chris Clark began prepping for *Sus Dog*, he settled on a loose theme – what if The Beach Boys necked some pills and made rave tunes? Compared to 2021's beautifully rendered but apocalyptic *Playground In A Lake*, Clark's tenth album is undoubtedly more playful. For the first time, Clark's own voice dominates throughout. He gained confidence to use his brittle, yearning falsetto after reaching out to Thom Yorke for advice. Yorke ended up executive producing *Sus Dog*, adding vocals and bass to the distorted, lurching waltz of Medicine, one of the album's more disquieting moments. By contrast, Town Crank is more of a saucer-eyed Brian Wilson moment, a blistering electro stomp that explodes with volcanic intensity. Clutch Pearlers adopts a similarly zesty approach, with Clark addressing suffocating social awkwardness – a common lyrical theme here – to the syncopated thud of tuned mallets. *Sus Dog* is the sound of Clark finding his voice in more ways than one.

ALSO RELEASED

LP Giobbi

★★★

Light Places

COUNTER. DL/LP

The hype train around LP Giobbi has reached express speed this past year. The Texan DJ and producer's effervescent debut, *Light Places*, justifies that… in places. Giobbi's ear for feelgood melodies and adroit deployment of snake-hipped grooves are undeniable, but its blend of stadium-friendly vocal EDM and Eurodance will be too sweet, perhaps, for certain palates.

Oval

★★★★

Romantiq

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

The result of a commission by Frankfurt's German Romantic Museum finds Markus Popp in imperious form. Chords are distorted and jerked out of shape to create powerful percussive tools, but the pioneering glitch artist's music never tumbles into dissonance. Rather, tracks like the Reichian round of Rytmy shimmer like heat haze on the horizon.

Mark Barrott

★★★★

Jōhatsu

REFLECTIONS. DL/LP

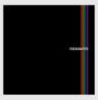
Over three decades, Mark Barrott has become a leading light of ambient and an astute shape-shifter; working with the late Virgil Abloh, Louis Vuitton's visionary artistic director, and devising soundscapes for cruise ships. The graceful, meditative *Jōhatsu* is Barrott's first film soundtrack, but his grasp of mood, pace and space make him a natural for augmenting visual narratives.

The Orb

★★★

Prism

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP



Eclecticism remains The Orb's energy and dub doctor Alex Paterson and cohort Michael Rendall aren't taking things easy yet. To trademark electro skank, their eighteenth album lashes panoramic drum'n'bass rollers (Living In Recycled Times) to pulsing deep house (The Beginning Of The End) and amniotic ambient (Prism). Guests include Youth and reggae producer Gaudi. *SW*

Soul dressing

How the '80s turned an earnest student with a passion for Americana into a pop star. By **Tom Doyle**.

Lloyd Cole And The Commotions

Rattlesnakes

★★★★

Easy Pieces

★★★

Mainstream

★★★

PROPER/UMC. LP

lloyd cole and the commotions
rattlesnakes

"Tragi-comic songs about intense, invariably doomed love affairs."

IN THE mid-1980s, when most of the British music scene was in thrall to synth-pop and looking east to Europe, many in Glasgow looked west to America. As the decade progressed, emerging groups wore their US influences overtly: Deacon Blue (Steely Dan and Bruce Springsteen), Texas (Ry Cooder), Love And Money (Steely Dan again). Even Wet Wet Wet were so devoted to soul traditions that they had a first stab at their debut album in Memphis with Al Green producer Willie Mitchell.

For better or for worse, as an Americana-obsessed English outsider in Glasgow, where he'd gone to study (*see Back Story*), Lloyd Cole was a forerunner of this trend, making his band The Commotions – guitarist Neil Clark, keyboard player Blair Cowan, bassist Lawrence Donegan and drummer Stephen Irvine – in the image of Booker T. & The M.G.'s. At the same time, (literally) chiming with The Smiths, he held a strong passion for The Byrds, along with a penchant for arch, bookwormy lyrics that positioned him only a few steps apart from Morrissey and set up Lloyd Cole And The Commotions as the other great student bedsit band of the era.

Getty/Steve Rapport

BACK STORY: ACADEMIA BLUES

- Born in 1961 and raised in Derbyshire, Lloyd Cole spent a year studying law in London before ditching the course to focus on philosophy and English at the University of Glasgow, where he bonded with the future members of The Commotions. His parents had moved to Scotland, too, where they ran Glasgow Golf Club. It was in the basement of their house there that Cole first experienced a songwriting eureka moment, when in one weekend he penned both Perfect Skin and Forest Fire, setting him determinedly on his way after he signed a record deal with Polydor within a month and turned his back on academia.

Following their swift summer '84 ascent from uni gigs to Top Of The Pops with wordy, Dylan-esque pop song Perfect Skin, came their debut long-player, *Rattlesnakes*. Innocent of some of the worst studio production crimes of the era, nearly 40 years on it sounds punchy on a new vinyl cut (reissued with the other two Commotions albums released during the decade) and swirls with string arrangements provided by arranger Anne Dudley only two years after she'd brilliantly performed the same task on ABC's sophisti-pop extravaganza, *The Lexicon Of Love*.

Vocally, in his head, Cole seemed to want to be Lou Reed, but in reality came over as heavily indebted to Edwyn Collins in his quavering tones: a tentative, vibrato-heavy delivery that only added to his shy and vulnerable appeal. What's more, he seemed happy to emphasise his weediness. Amid the Southern soul shapes of the atmospheric Speedboat, with its Hammond organ stabs and bluesy guitar bursts, he depicted himself in the classic weakling scenario of having "sand kicked in my eyes".

For the most part, these were tragi-comic songs about intense, invariably doomed love affairs, filled with cultural namechecks: Leonard Cohen to Simone du Beauvoir, Norman Mailer to Arthur Lee. If Cole's lyrics sometimes smacked of smart-arsery (see Charlotte Street's "She said, 'Do you know how to spell audaciously?'/I could tell I was in love"), it's easier to forgive when considering he was still only 23 when *Rattlesnakes* was released.

Recorded within a month in London with producer Paul Hardiman (The The; Kate Bush), these 10 tracks have worn very well. The headlong rush of the title song evokes western film themes in its tale of a troubled and reckless – if, of course, beautiful and well-read – girl. But it's especially with its ballads that the timelessness of *Rattlesnakes* is made clear: the Muscle Shoals-styled arrangement of Forest Fire backdrops a Velvets-ish story of someone destined to "burn herself out"; towering closer Are You Ready To Be Heartbroken? spotlights Clark's nifty acoustic picking as Cole reveals an intense romantic fear that by falling in love, he's setting himself up for failure.

Instead, what followed was a success that seemed to blindside Cole and The Commotions. *Rattlesnakes* reached Number 13 in the album chart and Polydor pushed for a swift follow-up. Preliminary sessions with Hardiman stalled due to record company interference and the band were matched with hit-makers of the day, Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley (Madness; Dexys). 1985's *Easy Pieces*, subsequently dismissed by the band as rushed and undercooked (Lawrence Donegan declared "most of it was mortifyingly bad"; Cole damned Minor Character as "the worst lyric ever written"), is better than its creators believed.

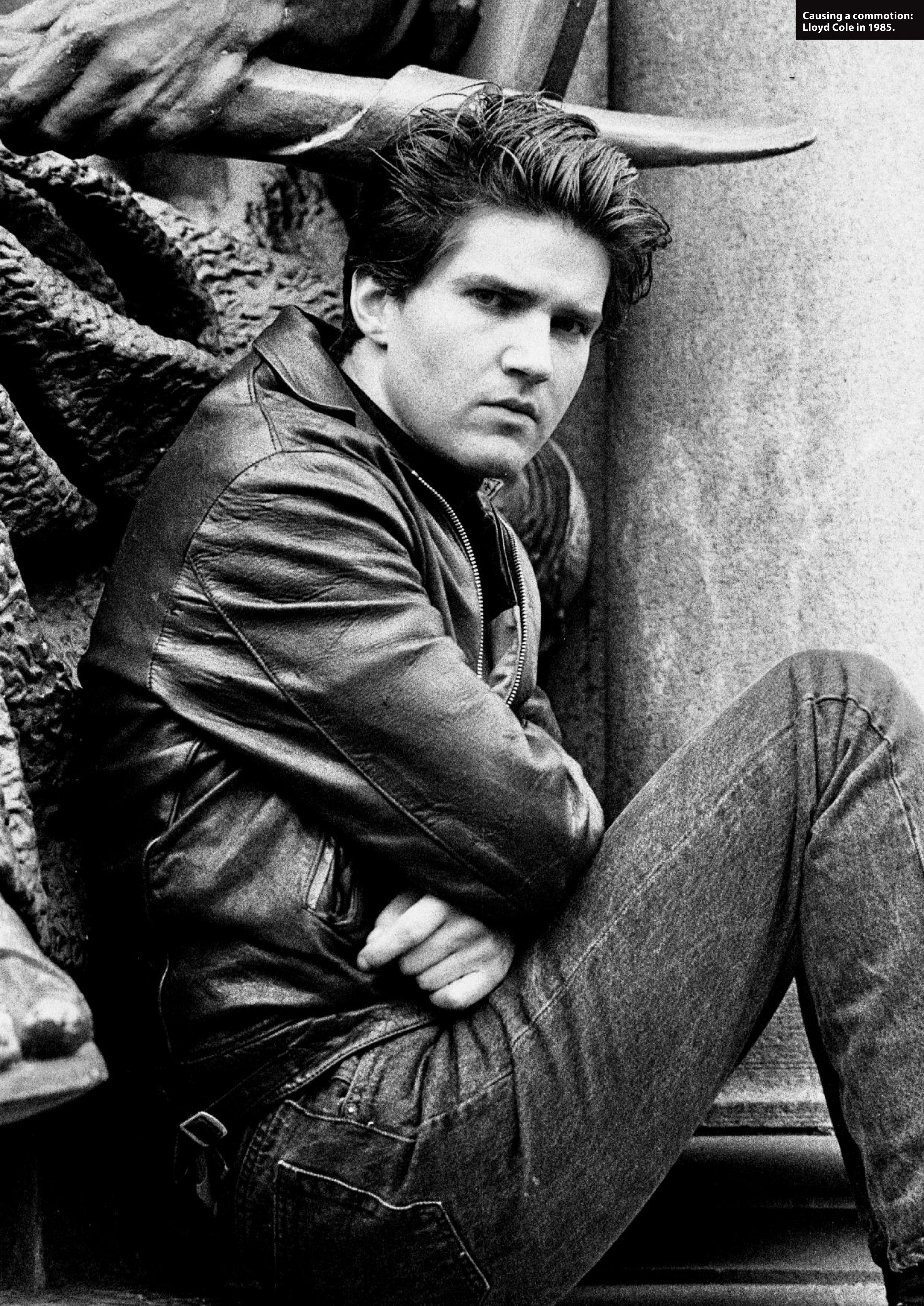
Not much is radically different in the production: the drums are a bit boxy; a brass section wanders into the frame on opener Rich. If, lyrically, a lot of it sounds pressured and low (there are even recurring references to suicide), its highpoints match anything on its predecessor. Cut Me Down ("I've been bought and sold, and I've been hung upside down") is slow-burning and passionate FM rock. Perfect Blue, with its aching harmonica, is fine, dreamy-headed, funky pop.

A couple of inclusions (Grace; Why I Love Country Music) sound like paler Rattlesnakes rewrites, but then there is Brand New Friend, a cousin of The The's Uncertain Smile, that builds beautifully over its almost five-minute length, and as a single reached UK Number 19. Charting two places higher was follow-up Lost Weekend – Iggy's The Passenger rewritten with a lyric detailing double pneumonia suffered by the singer in an Amsterdam hotel room. It was Cole and The Commotions' biggest hit and presumably bought mostly by those attracted to its perky beat rather than its miserable words.

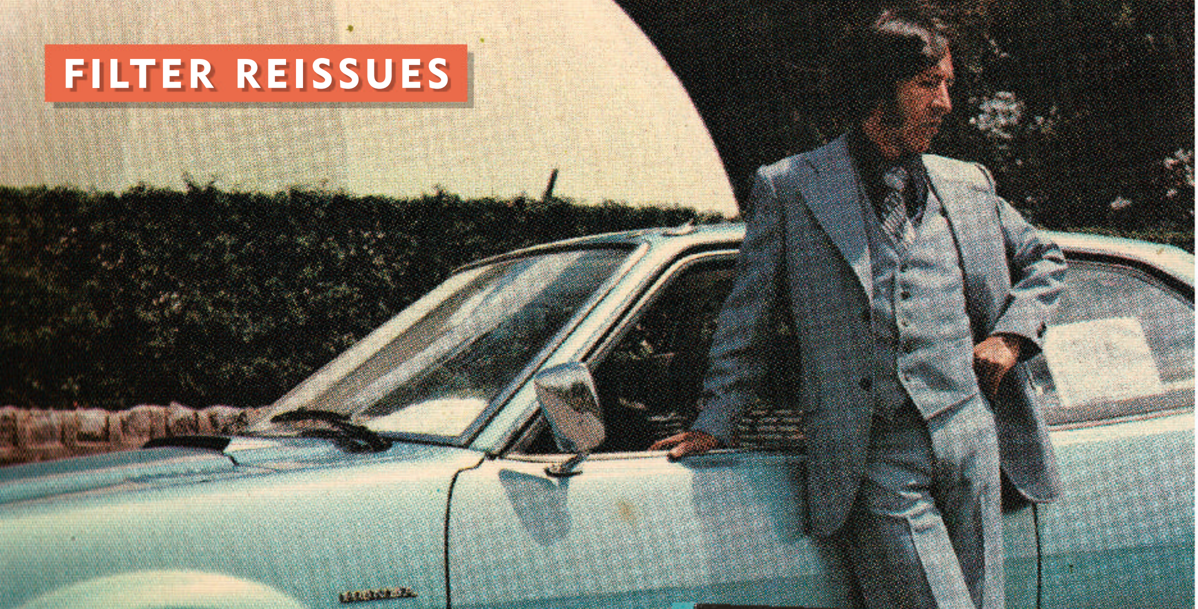
This being the '80s, the budget for '87's *Mainstream* was £300,000 (10 times that of their debut), and overseen, in a fractious five studio months that saw Cowan quit, by Ian Stanley of Tears For Fears. It, too, sounds good for its age: opener My Bag imagining the overheated thoughts of a cokehead stockbroker; 29 paying shuffling soul homage to Roxy Music's Just Like You. Side two is where much of the production money was spent, notably on the synthy contours of Big Snake with its cameos from Jon Hassell and Tracey Thorn.

The experience of making *Mainstream* exhausted both the singer and group, however, and they resolved to split in 1989. Cole moved to America to pursue a solo career and Donegan became a journalist, but there were clearly no lingering bad feelings since all the original participants reunited in 2004 for a *Rattlesnakes* 20th anniversary tour.

In the end, theirs is a tale of a band undone by commerce, who nearly lost themselves in a cloud of '80s reverb, but whose best music – as freshly polished on these vinyl remasters – only seems to grow in stature with the passing of time.



Causing a commotion:
Lloyd Cole in 1985.



Polibio Mayorga: Ecuador's space-age music man.

Various

★★★★

Ecuatoriana – El Universo Paralelo De Polibio Mayorga 1969-1981

ANALOG AFRICA. CD/DL/LP

A madcap sonic tale of one man's mission to modernise the Ecuadorian music scene.

ECUATORIANA
EL UNIVERSO PARALELO DE POLIBIO MAYORGA

ARMED WITH studio know-how and a box-fresh Moog synth, producer Polibio Mayorga quickly eclipsed his goal of modernising his region's ancestral rhythms, scoring a string of space-age '70s hits that mixed up tropical psychedelia and cumbia rhythms with avant-garde sounds. So dominant was his presence on radio stations Cosmopolita and Marañón de Quito, Mayorga adopted pseudonyms to make it appear an even playing field. From the zippy melodies of America Índia to the jutting, interlocking horns of Haciendo Bomba and the manically warped spaghetti western of Muevase Vecin, the best are captured here. And while Di Que Me Amas's queasy mariachi squelch or Bomba de Pobres' whimsical call-and-response won't suit all tastes, this inimitable, thoroughly off-the-map round-up is beautifully judged.

Andy Cowan

JAZZ SUITE UNDER MILK WOOD
THE STAN TRACEY QUARTET

The Stan Tracey Quartet

★★★★★

Jazz Suite (Inspired By Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood)

RESTEAMED. LP

Iconic British jazz album reissued on vinyl for the first time in 40 years.

"Does anyone over here realise how good this guy is?" said Sonny Rollins to the audience at Ronnie Scott's in 1965, referring to his then sideman, London pianist Stan Tracey, who would contribute to Alfie, the American saxophonist's memorable movie score. The same year, Tracey recorded this album, his magnum opus, an eight-piece jazz suite inspired by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas's 1954 radio play Under Milk Wood about a fictional Welsh fishing village. Aided by tenor saxophonist Bobby Wellins, bassist Jeff Clyne and drummer Jack Dougan, Tracey created a masterpiece that still sounds fresh and vibrant today. His stylistic debt to Thelonious Monk shows on several jaunty but infectious tracks, like Cockle Row and No Good Boyo, but the album's centerpiece, the sublime and hauntingly desolate ballad Starless And Bible Black, reveals an original musical mind. Now remastered, this classic jazz album sounds better than ever.

Charles Waring

Joyce Street

★★★

Tied Down

NUMERO GROUP. CD/DL/LP

The 1970s housewife who dreamt of country stardom.

Still a teenager when she stepped off the bus in LA from her native Mississippi, the then-Joyce Spence wanted to be the new Bobbie Gentry. Instead, she married and became a mom who occasionally recorded some of her songs, but always for tiny labels such as Hollywood's Reena, or Sonobeat in Austin. Just like Bobbie she wrote her own songs, but her voice had more in common with Loretta Lynn, a pure country warble that didn't have quite enough 'pop' in it for wider success. It's a shame bigger labels didn't pick up the singles and demos collected on *Tied Down*, because when she hits a countrypolitan sweet spot on Life Ain't Worth Livin' (If I Can't Have You), Woman Do Something Nice, Mississippi Moonshine and the ever-so-slightly disenchanted California You're Slippin', those girlish dreams could have just as easily come true.

Andy Fyfe

The Hidden Cameras

★★★★★

The Smell Of Our Own

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

Toronto "gay folk church music" collective mark notable birthday.

"I've got a whole bible in me," sings Joel Gibb on the homophobia-defying Fear Of 'Zine Failure, one of the fine B-sides included on this expanded 20th anniversary reissue of The Hidden Cameras' second album. Go-go dancing between the sacred and profane, the grad-student-ish Gibb and his frequently balaclava'd co-conspirators subverted angelic choral rushes and Sunday school clap-alongs into songs of gay sex, love and trauma that sought absolutely no credit in the straight world. The deep melancholy of Shame or Boys Of Melody is tempered by the euphoric orchestrations of Golden Streams or The Man That I Am With My Man's carnal joy, while Ban Marriage's filthy challenge to heteronormativity still sounds like timpani-fuelled revolution rumbling under the flagstones. Demos and radio sessions offer another chance to get to know – sometimes pretty biblically – a jubilant testament of outsider pop.

Victoria Segal

Leon Russell

★★★★

Signature Songs

DARK HORSE. CD/DL/LP

Leon Russell's songbook-sung solo.

The late Leon Russell was like Hoagy Carmichael after a hundred acid trips: a masterful composer of the latter-day Great American Songbook with a visionary, mystical manhandle. A member of the studio musicians dubbed The Wrecking Crew, he did sessions for Frank Sinatra and Phil Spector, but was dubbed 'The Master of Space and Time' when he became ringleader of Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs & Englishmen for his ability to play outside the sonic box. This collection of originals was initially self-released in 2001 and is being reissued on George Harrison's label, co-run by George's son Dhani. The top-drawer material is astonishing – A Song For You, Tight Rope, Delta Lady, This Masquerade, Hummingbird – with Russell's raw and mostly solo vocals accompanied only by his *sui generis* blend of concert and honky-tonk piano.

Michael Simmons

King Tubby

★★★★

The Roots Of Dub

GREENSLEEVES. DL/LP

Remastered limited vinyl of a superlative dub LP.

KING TUBBY PRESENTS
THE ROOTS OF DUB

The electronics technician and transformer specialist Osbourne Ruddock was crowned King Tubby for the sound system he operated in the Waterhouse ghetto of western Kingston, JA, earning the epithet 'The Dub Inventor' in the early 1970s for the sonic remix experiments he undertook on customised equipment in a converted front room. Released in 1975, *The Roots Of Dub* was among the first long-players issued in his name and it remains one of the best dub albums of all time, the gritty Aggrovators rhythms supplied by Bunny Lee stripped down to their core of drum and bass, with just a smattering of top-end phasing and snatches of studio dialogue keeping the listener firmly gripped throughout. Outstanding hits by Johnny Clarke, Cornell Campbell and others are transformed through the mixing artistry, and this pressing has given the bass notes greater clarity.

David Katz

Mary Mundy

★★★★

Mother Nature

REAL GONE MUSIC. LP

1980 rare disco funk with powerhouse vocals.

MOTHER NATURE

From Dillon, South Carolina, Mary Mundy made one album and a few singles before turning to academia. 1980's *Mother Nature*, originally on the obscure New York Image label, currently goes for ridiculous prices, so this first ever vinyl reissue is welcome. Produced by Lew Hanson, it's full of end-of-the-night disco verging on hi-NRG anthems, peaking with exultant Love Me, Love Me, with Mundy delivering full-throated gospel diva exhortations and breathy whispers over taut funk guitar and big horns. Yet she was no one-trick wonder. Each Other is adrenalised pop, while the climactic title track proves she has enough razzmatazz to galvanise Broadway, had she so desired.

Lois Wilson

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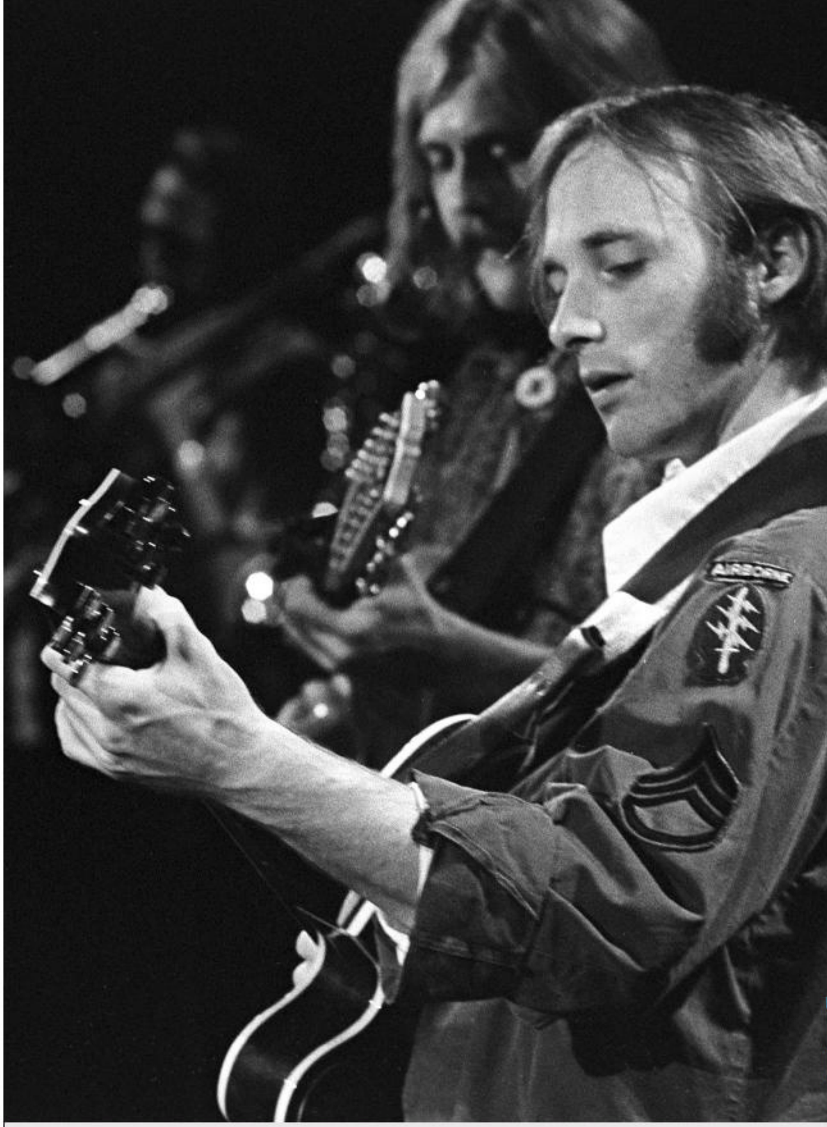
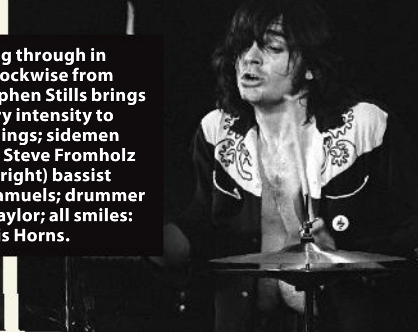




Powering through in 1971: (clockwise from left) Stephen Stills brings a military intensity to proceedings; sidemen (far left) Steve Fromholz and (far right) bassist Fuzzy Samuels; drummer Dallas Taylor; all smiles: Memphis Horns.

Henry Diltz (4)

Stills ills!

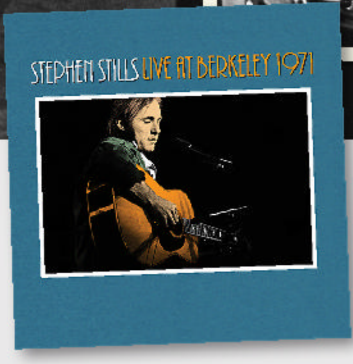
'Captain Manyhands' fights his way out of CSNY and into the spotlight. Casualties multiply. By John Mulvey.

Stephen Stills

★★★★

Live At Berkeley 1971

OMNIVORE. CD/DL/LP



STEPHEN STILLS has not always been the easiest millionaire rock star to sympathise with, but his attempts to build a solo career through 1971 still have a terrible pathos to them. In June, he released his second solo record: "A fifth-rate album by a solid second-rate artist who so many lower-middlebrows insist on believing is actually first-rate," wrote Rolling Stone's John Mendelsohn, harshly.

That same month, Stills began his tour at the Celebration Of Life festival in Louisiana, an apocalypse of heatstroke and Hell's Angels carnage where the police charged local straights admission to ogle the naked hippies. The support act, Crazy Horse minus Neil Young, pulled out before the tour proper began, and Stills took to drinking heavily to calm his nerves: one night, suggests David Browne in his book about CSNY, Stills spent five minutes finding his stool on-stage. His guitar and harmony partner in the band, Steve Fromholz, later recalled an unsustainable tour diet of "Jim Beam, cocaine and cheeseburgers".

Arenas were often half-empty, as Stills embarked on epic shows that incorporated solo folk and blues sections alongside a big band soul revue with the Memphis Horns. The concept, Stills tantalised a Chicago audience, was "A marathon where you watch the singer bleed while he tries to sing 18 songs in a row". But awful distractions persisted: a rigger fell to his death at the Madison Square Garden show; Stills crashed his motorbike and tore his knee ligaments, finishing the tour in a brace.

Unsurprisingly, Stills swiftly put the whole escapade behind him, retreating to Colorado and forming Manassas. For a year, he had vigorously and neurotically tried to assert himself as a solo artist away from the theoretical democracies of CSNY and Buffalo Springfield. Perhaps, it transpired, he was better off merely calling the shots in another band.

Fifty-two years later, though, this document of the tour's last two nights in San Francisco still has much to commend it. Stills comes across, as ever, as a divisive figure. On the one hand, an endurance athlete who cannot help but try too hard, who brings military intensity to even the most delicate musical traditions. On the other, an extraordinarily supple and ambitious artist, with an understandable chip on his shoulder; if those other guys he worked with could get so much love, why couldn't he?

Live At Berkeley 1971 powers through it all – relentless, often overwrought, often brilliant, too. There are Louvins-style country duets with Fromholz (Jesus Gave Love Away For Free) and virtuoso clawhammer banjo picking (Know You've Got To Run). A medley of CSN's 49 Bye-Byes and Springfield's For What It's Worth is delivered solo, at the piano, as a frantic gospel rave-up. When the Memphis Horns turn up, you can feel Stills loosen up a little: Bluebird Revisited builds on the soulful burn he'd trialled with CSNY in 1969; Cherokee – a paean to Rita Coolidge, who'd recently left him for Graham Nash – is 10 minutes of high-level interplay between the horn section, Stills' indignant, sputtering lead, and his resilient rhythm section of Fuzzy Samuels and Dallas Taylor. Pretty great.

The highlights, though, come when he's joined by David Crosby for You Don't Have To Cry and The Lee Shore, their vocal blend gorgeous even without the median tone of Nash. While the two songs both have that hazy California promise and melancholy that made CSN(Y) so alluring, they also point up the fundamental differences between the two. Crosby's Lee Shore is impressionistic, unanchored, drifting into jazz-tinged extemporisations. Stills' You Don't Have To Cry is its match in beauty, and superficially ethereal. But there's a rigour and unstinting momentum driving it forward, like so much of Stills' dynamic, exhausting music. As if even in a fugue state, he can't stop himself being the strident taskmaster.

Her Royal I-ness: the golden voiced Marcia Griffiths.

Marcia Griffiths

★★★★

Essential Artist Collection

TROJAN. CD/DL/LP

The queen of reggae sings rocksteady, pop and lovers rock.

THROUGHOUT THIS well researched 1964-81 overview, Marcia Griffiths' voice is smooth, soulful and distinct. When she's working with producer Sonia Pottinger in the late '70s, it also becomes an instrument of liberation, the two women empowered in otherwise male-dominated studio territory on the self-authored Steppin' Out Of Babylon, intuitive readings of Bunny Wailer's Dreamland and Peaceful Woman, spinetingling on Bob Marley & The Wailers' I'm Hurting Inside. While her joyous remake of Bob Andy's Feel Like Jumping became her first Jamaican hit at Studio One, also included here are Harry Johnson-produced, string-sweetened duets with the aforesaid Andy, including 1970 hit Young, Gifted And Black and Pied Piper from '71, her most apparent touchstone then being Carla Thomas.

Lois Wilson

Grant Lee Buffalo

★★★★

Fuzzy

CHRYSALIS. LP

A 30th anniversary celebration of their stark Gothic-country debut.

Dynamics-rich power-trio Grant Lee Buffalo made quite the impression playing Jools Holland's TV show Later… in 1993 – and not just because of Grant-Lee Phillips' waxen cheekbones. The debut album they'd hatched in a century-old San Francisco steel foundry incorporated choice elements: 12-string acoustic guitars overdriven to squally extremes, impassioned, sometimes falsetto vocals, and what Phillips has since described as "the old world churn of pump organs and parlour pianos." Though you really had to see the trio live and Phillips would later trust in sheer craft as much as instinct, Jupiter And Teardrop, Fuzzy's title track and the R.E.M.-like Wish You Well lend some credence to Michael Stipe's contemporaneous contention that *Fuzzy* was "the best album of 1993 hands down." GLB's more ambitious 1994 follow-up, *Mighty Joe Moon*, is also getting a gatefold vinyl re-boot.

James McNair

"Timeline"
Suarasama

Suarasama

★★★★

Timeline

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

A second volume of North Sumatran acid-folk, no less.

In 2008, Drag City released a curious and beautiful album called *Fajar Di Atas Awan*, a record whose Eastern provenance was uncertain to most non-scholars, but whose uncanny atmosphere chimed perfectly with the US acid-folk around at the time. The album, it transpired, was the work of two Ethnomusicology lecturers from North Sumatra and had first been released in 1998; a work which drew on indigenous music traditions while not being beholden to them. It took the couple, Irwansyah Harahap and Rithaony Hutajulu, another five years to release a follow-up in 2013; only now is that album, *Timeline*, available in the West after the obligatory decade lag. Those few who love the debut will know what to expect this time: elaborate, pulsating rhythms, overlaid by Harahap's delicate arsenal of guitars and mandolins, organ drones and Hutajulu's mellow ululations. A sophisticated academic hybrid that convinces as traditional ritual, and one now suffused with additional poignancy: Harahap died in 2022.

John Mulvey

Don Cherry

★★★

Hear & Now

REAL GONE. LP

Avant-garde trumpeter's '70s fusion excursion; a fascinating curio.

A nomadic free spirit who travelled the world absorbing the music of other cultures to build a uniquely personal sonic language, Don Cherry was a supremely versatile horn player who didn't recognise musical boundaries. Though mainly known for his pioneering work in the avant-garde and world music spheres, in 1977 Cherry ventured into jazz fusion territory for a one-off LP for Atlantic Records produced by Narada Michael Walden. The album wasn't a critical or commercial success but, as this vinyl reissue reveals, it was certainly adventurous, blending mystical, Eastern-tinged heavy rock (Mahakali) with Santana-style Latin grooves (California) and Weather Report-influenced funky fusion (Karmapa Chenno). The best track is the atmospheric Universal Mother, where Cherry's prescient spoken rhymes anticipate hip-hop. The album also boasts a stellar supporting cast, including saxophonist Michael Brecker, bassist Marcus Miller (then just 17), and drummer Tony Williams.

Charles Waring

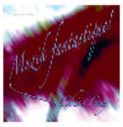
Chris & Cosey

★★★★

Muzik Fantastique!

CTI. DL/LP

The electronic pioneers' heady past in coloured vinyl form.



By their tenth album, ex-Throbbing Gristle members Chris Carter and Cosey Fanni Tutti had come in from the cold of their experiments in electronic primitivism, which began in 1981, and were instead paralleling techno's sleeker, sequenced machinations. From 1992, *Muzik Fantastique!* remains a minimalist work of shadowy intent, often infused with Cosey's sensual charge: an erotic Donna Summer on the nightclubbing Fantastique, suitably ethereal and giddy on the marimba-laced Afrakira, a spectral presence through the folds of Hidden Man. Carter is equally chameleon-like, re-purposing a spectrum of sound that the pair had witnessed and immersed themselves in for decades. Also released this month: 1984's sinister soundtrack to the duo's own film Elemental 7 and 2007's *Feral Vapours Of The Silver Ether*, a beautiful, astute title for a more ambient, organic work that nevertheless still shivers in all the right places.

Martin Aston

Fred Davis

★★★

Cleveland Blues

COLEMINE. CD/DL/LP

Rare jazz blues from Cleveland, Ohio's then-ghetto, Hough.

Fred 'Dave' Davis lived the blues story. A promising singer, guitarist, pianist from Kansas City, his talent was derailed by violence and time spent in jail. At 49 he ended up shot and killed in a liquor store car park while running a hustle. He'd be forgotten if he hadn't worked alongside blues fan Howard Husock in Cleveland's Harco factory in the late '60s. Husock recorded him and some of his friends in his living room in August '69 so Davis could use the tape to get gigs; he subsequently formed Dave And The Blues Express and performed at the local joints. That tape, issued here as *Cleveland Blues*, comprises 11 tracks, nine self-written, that reveal a fantastic player, understated but swinging on Tell Me Pretty Baby, intense and dramatic on Midnight Is Falling, with a high-pitched, piercing voice that's hugely affecting throughout.

Lois Wilson

Lalo Schifrin

★★★★

Man On A Swing

WEWANTSOUNDS. LP

Multi-faceted score for understated 1974 thriller gets vinyl debut, dotted with unreleased outtakes.

Having had every note of his menacing, atonal score for The Exorcist removed by director William Friedkin the previous year, Lalo Schifrin reasserted his chameleonic worth with *Man On A Swing*. Recorded alongside the Wrecking Crew's Emil Richards, Bud Shank and Howard Roberts, breakbeat-rich jazzy numbers like Juke Box Source, Factory Vibe and Radio Source marry bossa nova shuffles with easy bass lines, frenzied Hammonds and widdle-tastic wah-wah. And while there's hints of Herrmann's Psycho in the squirrelling violins of Rosehaven Motel, it's Schifrin's series of avant-garde trance sequences that steal the show, the ideal foil to Joel Grey's off-kilter turn as flaky clairvoyant Franklin Wills. A smattering of bonus tracks, including a stripped-back Radio Source, reaffirm Schifrin's status as a master writer and arranger.

Andy Cowan

Getty

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Travelling without moving: *Children Of The Sun*'s (clockwise from above left) Mark Capanni; Orion's Dee Jarlett and Martin Hanstead; album curator Paul Hillery; Will & James Ragar.

FILE UNDER...

Travel agency

Even if you can't leave the house, you can be transported by music. By **Jim Irvin.**

EARLIER THIS century, avid crate-digger Paul Hillery had carved out an agreeable career as a promoter and jobbing DJ, not the floor-filling kind, but the kind who played whatever he fancied before the band came on. But this stopped abruptly, 13 years ago, when he suffered a breakdown. Subsequent problems, including being diagnosed with a complex form of PTSD, effectively made him housebound in Northampton, UK, and changed his relationship with the music he'd enjoyed spinning for people.

"Music became therapy for me," he says.

Using it not only to heal, but to connect with the outside world, Hillery zeroed in on the sounds he truly loved rather than what had worked when played out in public. "As I suffer from anxiety, anything with a heavy BPM sets off a panic attack!" Diving deep into tunes that didn't make him anxious, he posted numerous mellow mixes under the rubric Folk Funk and Trippy Troubadours, which slowly won him a devoted online following. Then he was contacted out of the blue by Tony Higgins, curator of numerous fine compilations, who admired his work and introduced him to BBE Records, who commissioned a compilation from Hillery with the proviso that it be drawn from music unavailable on major streaming services, giving it a 'Get it here or nowhere' exclusivity. Hillery agreed and employed his deep knowledge of private pressings, unreleased promos and library albums.

"Because of my situation, I wanted to do an LP that felt like travelling, I get to travel to different places throughout the world by picking a record off my shelf. I can go from Chile to Australia to Japan. . . ." Thus, last year's acclaimed *We Are The Children Of The Sun*. Unsurprisingly, a musical travelogue compiled by someone stuck in isolation struck a chord post-pandemic. "All of a sudden, that's the only way everyone else could travel too!" he says. His LP quickly sold out.

Now here comes *Once Again We Are The Children Of The Sun* ★★★★ (BBE), another uplifting collation of hard to find nuggets from disparate sources – folk, jazz-funk, Christian and New Age rarities – whose proximity creates an unexpected resonance. There's often something urgent and hopeful in private press recordings, the sound of people taking one shot at their dreams. "Yes, and quite a lot of those private press albums turn out to be one-trackers," Hillery notes. "They got a bit more drunk or stoned, or the bass player was turned up in the mix, something happened, and one track just stands out from the rest. It's great to be able to create a platform for these forgotten moments of greatness. It's not about the rarity or being elitist, these are the records that I reach for when I need something."

Highlights? The grooving CS&N mood of Will & James Ragar's As The Day Grows Tired, which is picked up by Cunningham Corner's flute-borne Free And Easy. The punchy Fate by Bugatti & Musker – known best for Chaka Khan's version, sampled by Thomas Bangalter for Stardust's Music Sounds Better With You – is here as their demo recording, taken from a library record. There's the weirdly distant Ice Cold by Godspeed and the synth-draped folk chiller Moonshine by Orion, whose earthy simplicity acts like a clearing in a forest. Perhaps best of all is the closing track, Mark Capanni's If Life Was A Ferris Wheel, a warm, hopeful and lushly-produced Bread-style ballad (B-side of a promo-only single), whose backstory was a fleeting holiday romance. "I had to put that last because it always makes me cry," laughs Hillery.

That emotional subtext even extends to the cover art. The figures on the front are Hillery's children, photographed on the last occasion he was able to join them on holiday. Taken together, these seemingly modest components pack a surprisingly hefty punch that lands squarely in the feels. And takes you somewhere.

Once Again
We Are The
Children
Of The Sun.

> "In private press recordings, there's often the sound of people taking one shot at their dreams."

Paul Michael Hughes

World of echo

A 4-CD box of seven instrumental masterpieces from reggae's 'Mighty Two'. By **Andrew Perry**.

No ordinary Joe: Gibbs in 1971 – his legacy brings everlasting joy.

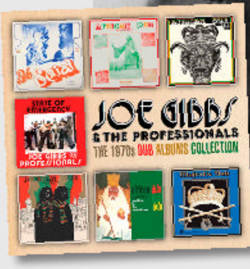
Majestic Dub
GIBBS
MAJESTIC DUB

Joe Gibbs & The Professionals

★★★★★

The 1970s Dub Albums Collection

CHERRY RED. CD


JOE GIBBS & THE PROFESSIONALS
THE 1970s DUB ALBUMS COLLECTION

LLOYD BRADLEY's definitive reggae chronicle, Bass Culture, vividly describes the impact of Joe Gibbs & The Professionals' *African Dub All-Mighty Chapter 3* on its release in 1977. This abstract and mesmerising long-player became a *sine qua non* for London punk's inner circle, and still ranks amongst the best dub albums of all time. Bradley rightly marvels at how its creators "completely rebalance [a] tune four or five times in the space of a minute," likening its alchemy to the local 'obeah', a spellcasting ceremony.

Almost 50 years later, we accept digital manipulation of music as standard, and it's easy to forget dub's revolutionary genius. While names like Lee 'Scratch' Perry, King Tubby and Bunny 'Striker' Lee have enjoyed near-exhaustive reissuing, Joe Gibbs has been sparsely served. Yet, through the '70s, studio titan Gibbs bossed them all, churning out roots classics, including Culture's Two Sevens Clash, Dennis Brown's Money In My Pocket, and Althea & Donna's immortal Uptown Top Ranking – plus the dazzling run of hard-to-find instrumental/dub albums anthologised here.

Gibbs's backstory perhaps lacks romance: after studying electronics with the US army at Guantanamo Bay, he worked more as a facilitator than a hands-on producer. With engineer Errol Thompson, AKA 'E.T.', at the controls, the self-appointed 'Mighty Two' issued one of the very first dub albums: 1974's *Dub Serial* found the Soul Syndicate band revamping old ska and rocksteady rhythms to the new reggae beat. This and the first two *African Dub* chapters are extraordinary, given that Thompson had a rudimentary mixing desk run entirely on switches, not faders, forcing him to get doubly creative to generate otherworldly sounds.

By 1976, Gibbs had invested in a 16-track console, but that year's *State Of Emergency* offered vibrant instrumentals, minus effects, its cover image of street ruffians being frisked inspiring The Clash's White Riot sleeve. Kingston was in political chaos, and their brother's murder saw Ernest and Joseph Hoo-Kim at Channel One take a sabbatical, allowing Gibbs to poach their house band, The Revolutionaries, who included Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, Jamaica's peerlessly inventive 'rhythm killers'.

Attributed to Joe Gibbs & The Professionals, *Chapter 3* really is a cut above, featuring outlandish re-imaginings of Dennis Brown cuts Repatriation and Love Me Always, while elsewhere 'E.T.' busts out zany sounds including doorbells, gongs and cuckoo clocks. On 1979's *Chapter 4*, cowboy gunfire, neighing and a versioned Dawn Penn's You Don't Love Me (No, No, No); while the same year's *Majestic Dub* integrates far-out synths, opener Ten Commandments launching off *à la* Giorgio Moroder's pulsating Moog on Donna Summer's I Feel Love.

By 1983 Gibbs had moved to Miami, while Thompson worked in a Kingston grocery store owned by Gibbs, the 'Mighty Two' not fallen, just semi-retired. This legacy brings everlasting joy.

Sun Ra And His Intergalactic Solar Arkestra

★★★★

Space Is The Place: Music From The Original Soundtrack

MODERN HARMONIC. CD/DL/LP

Interstellar bandleader's 1972 movie and soundtrack reissued with previously unheard bonus material.

The Gleaner Co. (Media) LTD

Not to be confused with his 1973 studio album, *Space Is The Place* was a movie Ra made a year earlier; a bizarre collision of documentary film and science fiction drama presented with a touch of blaxploitation swagger. The soundtrack wasn't released until after Ra's death in 1993 but has now been restored for this deluxe reissue that includes the film in both Blu-ray and DVD formats. What makes this audio-visual feast even more desirable is the inclusion of a mind-blowing unreleased LP called *The Mathematics Of The Altered Destiny*. It contains four spoken-word pieces outlining Ra's cosmic vision of "another order of beings." The epic title track is a metaphysical dialogue with June Tyson against an eerie backdrop of twittering bird-like horns, while the impressive My World Is The Space Way, with its scattergun percussion, moaning brass and Marshall Allen's squiggly saxophone lines, crystallises Ra's uniquely cosmic aesthetic.

Charles Waring

Isao Suzuki, Hideo Ichikawa, Masahiko Togashi Akira Shiomoto

★★★★

Approach

BBE. CD/DL/LP

Latest instalment in the J-Jazz Masterclass series is a spacey lounge/fusion monster.

Originally released in 1986, this ear-poppingly diverse four-way collaboration united three of the (then) most established names in Japanese jazz with younger guitarist Akira Shiomoto to counter-intuitively coherent effect. As Hideo Ichikawa's subversive hotel lobby-style piano threatens to close in on a great lost Mike Post theme-tune, Isao Suzuki's looping bass ushers him over the threshold into a spur-of-the-moment Penguin Cafe Orchestra reunion. It's thrillingly unpredictable stuff with perhaps one too many solos on Togashi's specially adapted drum kit. But the pioneering free-jazz percussionist (paralysed from the waist down after an accident in the late '60s) redeems himself with a majestically unrepentant cowbell jam on standout track Long Straight Road.

Ben Thompson

David Sylvian & Stephan Mathieu

★★★

Wandermüde

SAMADHISOUND. CD/DL/LP

Ambient remix of Sylvian's 2003 LP *Blemish*; on (double) vinyl for the first time.

Sylvian's sixth solo album *Blemish* was an important marker; a response to the end of his relationships with wife Ingrid Chavez and with Virgin Records that promoted the singer's desolate presence and more personal (rather than oblique) words by reducing the arrangements to a solemn, ambient drift provided by electronics expert Christian Fennesz and jazz guitarist Derek Bailey. Sylvian cared enough about *Blemish* to remix it for 2005's *The Good Son Vs. The Only Daughter*, and again in 2012 as *Wandermüde* (literally, "tired of wandering"), where another digital specialist, Stephan Mathieu, stripped out Sylvian's vocals and thickened the ambient layers. There are still eight tracks, but *Wandermüde* is essentially a 64-minute immersion in what feels like a lonely, isolated place, where words cannot convey the necessary emotion.

Martin Aston

Various

★★★★

Studio One Space-Age Dub Special

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Cosmic instrumental gems from 13 Brentford Road.

Following last year's top-notch *Studio One Music Lab* comp, *Space-Age Dub Special* similarly takes a deep dive into the more out-there (mostly) instrumental cuts from the foundational Jamaican studio. Featuring 18 tracks cherry-picked from the series of super-rare Dub Specialist LPs released from 1974-80, here producer Clement 'Sir Coxsone' Dodd and engineer Sylvan Morris imaginatively deconstruct both familiar (Juk's Inc. – a skeletal version of Dawn Penn's immortal soundsystem scorcher No, No, No) and lesser-known (Squash Dub – a monster groove re-rub of Sugar Minott's Love Gonna Pack Up) rhythms in fine, dubwise style. More drums-and-bass accentuation than studio wizardry, highlights such as I A See I, all tumbling Nyabinghi percussion and righteous Rasta chants, elevate this collection to must-buy status for both S1 devotees and novices alike. A masterclass in sonic minimalism.

Simon McEwen

STUDIO ONE SPACE-AGE
Dub Special

Happy go lucky: Pernice Brothers, 1998 (from left) Thom Monahan, Bob Pernice, Joe Pernice, Peyton Pinkerton.

Dennis Kleiman

Technically Ecstasy

This month's diamond espied in the dust: a marriage of beauteous pop and emotional pain.

Pernice Brothers

Overcome By Happiness

SUB POP, 1998

KNOCKING 30, a classic age for such activity, Joe Pernice was taking stock. A Master of Arts from U-Mass in Amherst for whom a career in teaching had beckoned, he was in a band – Scud Mountain Boys – with their third album released by Sub Pop and a keen following on the alt-country scene. What he knew and his bandmates didn't, however, is that they were about to split.

"It was nothing personal," the soft-spoken Pernice sighs today. "You know, those guys were some of my closest friends. But musically, I was just *bored*. We were pigeonholed as a sound – and to be fair, we kind of painted ourselves into that corner."

With proceeds from the Scuds deal, Pernice had bought his first CD player and copies of *Pink Moon* and *Sgt. Pepper's*. "Then I bought some Burt Bacharach and suddenly I was all over the shop," he recalls. "I didn't care if I was listening to Dinosaur Jr. or Carole King. The one thing I *wasn't* listening to was country music."

Forming in Pernice's head was *Overcome By Happiness*, his debut album as Pernice Brothers. In 1998, it would alight as a fully-formed masterpiece of bittersweet popcraft, with spiritual cousins in Badfinger and Teenage Fanclub. In 2023 it's mentioned in hushed tones by its adherents – a fandom likely to swell from May 18 when an expanded reissue is released by New West – but as Pernice told the Scuds' Sub Pop A&R Joyce Linehan in 1996, he could offer no guarantee that his new direction would pan out: "I wanted strings, I wanted horns, but that was about as deep as I went. And she said, 'OK, let's do it.'"

Early Pernice Brothers songs were recorded at Joe's brother Bob's house in Carlisle, Mass – Sub Pop single Jimmy Coma featured Joe and Bob on guitars and Stephen Desaulniers from the Scuds on bass. Others were demoed at home and assessed in Pernice's knackered 1979 Pontiac Bonneville, its 8-track converted to play cassettes. Their melodies were creamy, ascendant, carrying finely-tuned miniatures of doubt and regret, and worse. In 2023, Pernice acknowledges, "There's a lot of pain in that record for me, a lot of personal things. Anxiety and me go way back."

Most striking of all, the exquisite Chicken Wire followed a young woman to her garage and her suicide. The last objects she registers as she slips away are a bale of chicken wire and a rusty lawn mower, the Carver-esque bathos underlined, in the final album version, by a lone, Bacharachian flugelhorn.

"The person was real, someone I knew at high school," says Pernice of the song's tragic heroine. "I was an awkward, weird-looking teenager and this person was super-popular, beautiful, artistic. Even as we got older, she would write to me every once in a while but I had no idea that she was tormented. When she took her own life I was absolutely stunned by it."

Pernice describes the five weeks of recording the album at Studio .45 in Hartford, Connecticut – with Tom Monahan and Michael Deming at the controls and key contributions from New Radiant Storm King guitarist Peyton Pinkerton and Lilys drummer Aaron Sperske – as "magical", a hermetic experience fuelled by Pinkerton's gourmet cooking and a case of 50 per cent ABV Allen's Ginger Brandy. "There was a period of seven days where I didn't go outside," says Pernice. "I was starting to get scurvy, probably. My skin was translucent."

Tracking the strings and brass – the elements that had defined his vision from the start – the stakes were high: "because it might sound like a hat on a hat, right? Too much. But hearing the strings come off that fat two-inch tape, it was thrilling. I remember thinking to myself, I don't want to *ever* stop doing this."

With the masters boxed, *Overcome By Happiness* was everything Pernice wanted it to be. Would anyone else notice? Not his concern. "I just figured, I made the record. And then it'll come out. And it'll sell 2,000 copies if I'm lucky. And then maybe I'll get a chance to make another one."

The "zero expectations" policy turned out to be prudent. Sub Pop had found themselves in a post-grunge slump – "partly through signing people like me," says Pernice – its processes in disarray. Joyce Linehan had resigned her post (in order to become Pernice's manager) and Pernice's new A&R was working part-time. But he's not bitter about *Overcome*'s hard landing. Softening the blow over the years, its boosters could hardly have been more vocal. One of them, the late Rhino Records executive Gary Stewart, used to keep CD copies of the album in the trunk of his car and hand them to people he felt needed to hear it. (That turned out to be most people.) Stewart is thanked, poignantly, in the sleevenote to the New West reissue.

Pernice doesn't spend much time picking apart his old albums. He's had other records to make, a career to sustain. But he's surprised himself by welcoming the renewed interest in *Overcome By Happiness*, 25 years on.

"For some reason, I think it's pretty cool," he smiles. "I've never been a fantastic one for taking compliments. But maybe I've got a much bigger ego than I thought."

Danny Eccleston

Pernice Brothers' Overcome By Happiness 25th Anniversary Edition vinyl box set is released by New West in May.

PERNICE BROTHERS
OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS

> "Anxiety and me go way back."
>
> **JOE PERNICE**

CREDITS

Tracks: Crestfallen/ Overcome By Happiness/Sick Of You/Clear Spot/ Dimmest Star/ Monkey Suit/ Chicken Wire/Wait To Stop/All I Know/ Shoes And Clothes/ Wherein Obscurely/ Ferris Wheel

Personnel: Joe Pernice (vocals, guitars)/Thom Monahan (bass, vocals)/Michael Deming (acoustic & electric pianos, vocals)/Peyton Pinkerton (guitars, vocals)/Bob Pernice (guitars, vocals)/ Aaron Sperske (drum kit, tympanum, percussion)/ Anhared Stowe (violin)/Christine Kolberger (violin)/ Katrina J. Smith (viola)/Kathleen Shiano (cello)/Susan Cavender Knapp (harp)/Tim Atherton (first trombone)/ David Sporny (second trombone)/ Peter McEachearn (third trombone)/ Mike Jones (flugelhorn)

Producers: Thom Monahan, Michael Deming, Joe Pernice, orchestra arranged and conducted by Michael Deming

Released: 1998

Recorded: Studio .45, Hartford, CT

Current availability: Streaming services; New West vinyl reissue

THE DUCKS
HIGH FLYIN'

Neil Young

Somewhere Under The Rainbow
★★★
The Ducks – High Flyin'
★★★★

WARNER. CD/LP

Two fabled bootleg double live sets offically released.

A London show performed just months after the grief-ridden *Tonight's The Night* sessions, well-known bootleg *Somewhere Under The Rainbow* from November 5, 1973 gets an official release from the Young archive. The album session band – The Santa Monica Flyers – are chaotically ragged, and the crowd is politely confused, as nine of the 14 songs are from *Tonight's The Night*, which infamously wouldn't see the light of day for nearly two years. By 1977, Young was in a much better mood, and his occasional funtime band The Ducks (Young, Bob Mosley, Jeff Blackburn and Johnny Craviotto) would perform in bars throughout the summer, largely unannounced. Moby Grape and Blackburn songs play alongside service versions of Young's Sail Away, Little Wing and Human Highway, while Mr Soul gets a turbo-charged outing halfway through CD2. As joyously together as …*Rainbow* is bleak, *High Flyin'* is a highlight of the bootleg series so far.

Andy Fyfe

A Produce

★★★★
The Clearing

INDEPENDENT PROJECT. CD

Vital underground electronica from 1980s LA.

First issued in 1988, the debut solo LP by synth-music explorer A Produce (real name Barry Craig) came after nearly a decade of experiment and local initiative: in the post-punk band Afterimage, then as the driving force behind two landmark anthologies of trance and noise, *L.A. Mantra I* and *II*. On The Clearing ("an album of conceptional musical space," according to the old mail-order flyer reproduced here), A Produce casts the enriched-Eno spell of *Another Green World* through a California anxiety of stark, modal guitar and dire, repeated keyboard hooks. There are striking touches: the street-party conga running through the desert aura of Farming In Arabia; the operatic-vocal and viola spasms contradicting the percolating certainty in Pulse. A Produce, who died in 2011, was also a rocker: The Raw Silk, The Uncarved Block is eight minutes of home-studio-Fillmore head-trip. A vision of the future barely heard on arrival, *The Clearing* now sounds right on time.

David Fricke

B.E.F.

★★★★
Music For Stowaways

COLD SPRING. CD/DL/LP

Stylish 1981 cassette release from deposed Human League duo Martyn Ware and Ian Craig-Marsh gets a deluxe reissue.

After Martyn Ware was booted out of The Human League in 1981, he and fellow bandmate Ian Craig-Marsh regrouped as production company The British Electric Foundation. Appropriating Eno's ambient ethos, their inaugural release – developed alongside Heaven 17's debut LP – was this cassette-only collection of utopian instrumentals. Originally intended as a lifestyle soundtrack for the Sony Stowaway (later renamed the Walkman), *Music For Stowaways* moves from Uptown Apocalypse's eerie Cabaret Voltaire electro-funk and the manic doomsday disco of Groove Thang (an instrumental version of the Heaven 17 debut single) to the basement giallo clatter of Music To Kill Your Parents By and Decline Of The West's grand, valedictory electronica. Remastered and augmented, *Music For Stowaways* now sounds simultaneously optimistic and foreboding, the soundtrack to a future that never happened and a lament for the future that did.

Andrew Male

COMING NEXT MONTH…

Noel Gallagher (pictured), Squid, Jenny Lewis, Fatoumata Diawara, This Is The Kit, Baxter Dury, Lloyd Cole, Rain Parade, Seckou Keita, Rufus Wainwright and more.

Matt Crockett

REISSUES EXTRA

DESMOND DEKKER

Desmond Dekker

★★★★
The Essential Collection

TROJAN. CD/DL/LP

Before Marley, ska/rocksteady singer Dekker was JA's biggest international star, thanks to rudeboy anthem 007 (Shanty Town) and infectious sufferers tale Israelites. This neat 50-track set includes all the hits, while the bewitching Fu Manchu perfectly showcases one of reggae's most expressive, distinctive voices. *SM*

STEVE HILLAGE
LA FORUM 31.1.77

Steve Hillage

★★★★
LA Forum 31.1.77

MADFISH. CD

As punk was about to boil over, *L*-period Hillage in full guitar flight supporting ELO. Sounds both synth-celestial and funky-jazz-rock earthy enough to transcend the slightly hissy quality: three 1977 tracks from the Rainbow complete the starry-eyed glid(e). *IH*

MAGNOLIA
ELECTRIC CO

Magnolia Electric Co

★★★★
Sojourner

SECRETLY CANADIAN. LP

Gone, but not forever: 10 years after Jason Molina's death, a vinyl debut for MEC's 2007 wooden box set. Four distinct sessions (one at Sun Studios; one solo; the others engineered by Steve Albini and David Lowery), this is peak Rust Belt melancholy. *KC*

THE I HEAR A NEW WORLD SESSIONS
JOE MEEK'S
Tea Chest Tapes

Joe Meek With The Blue Men

★★★
The I Hear A New World Sessions

CHERRY RED. LP

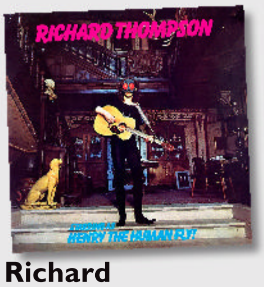
Seven exploratory recordings exhumed from a tea chest after 64 years. Not yet dubbed into their final shapes, there's the odd wobble (dig the raging clavioline on Magnetic Field) but Meek nuts will be euphoric. *IH*

Soundcarriers

★★★★
Celeste

PHOSPHONIC. CD/DL/LP

The Ghost Box-endorsed Nottingham quartet's second LP, from 2010. Retro-futurist '60s lounge pop (There Only Once's sweet/sinister Free Design-style trilling), motorik grooves (The Last Broadcast) and – especially on bonus instrumental tracks – cinematic atmosphere (a heavy flute mix of the title track). *JB*



Richard Thompson

★★★★
Henry The Human Fly!

UMC. LP

Heavy repress of Thompson's post-Fairports solo debut. Its eccentric angle on folk rock, unloved in 1972, is now a USP on the peculiarly brilliant likes of The Angels Took My Racehorse Away (featuring Sandy Denny and soon-to-be-wife Linda Peters). *JB*

Sharon Van Etten

★★★★
Tramp

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP

Eleventh anniversary refit for SVE's Aaron Dessner-produced third now comes with a new opening track: This Is Too Right. Its mood of doubt and romantic self-sabotage harks back to 2010's more tentative *Epic* and establishes the need for catharsis achieved on exorcisms like Give Out or the glorious Serpents. *JB*

WAVES OF DISTORTION

Various

★★★★
Waves Of Distortion

TWO-PIERS. CD/DL/LP

A joyful act of curation from the Brighton label traces a 'shoegaze' throughline from 1990 to 2022. The non-sniffy transatlantic pan-generational approach embraces pioneers (Slowdive), genre-transcendent stars (Mogwai; Galaxie 500; Beach House), newbies (bdrmm) and curios (Astrobrite's Crasher). *JB*

NANA VASCONCELOS

Naná Vasconcelos

★★★★
Saudades

LUMINESSENCE. LP

The Brazilian percussionist's 1979 recast of the one-stringed African berimbau in an orchestral setting. Traditionally used to soundtrack martial art capoeira, here it's a silvery spiritual thread through layers of voices, percussion and guitar. Cinematic centrepiece: Ondas ("Waves"). *JB*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★	☆
MOJO CLASSIC	EXCELLENT	GOOD	DISAPPOINTING	BEST AVOIDED	DEPLORABLE

Real gone kid:
Wayne Shorter,
circa 1960.

Wayne Shorter

A jazz superhero in 10 albums. Rest in power. By **Andrew Male.**

KNOWN AS 'Mr Weird' in high school, and as 'Mr Gone' amongst his peers, Wayne Shorter was a jazz musician of enigmatic individuality, his style gradually moving from a nervy, overly-detailed soprano sax squall heavily in thrall to John Coltrane to something more oblique, elliptical, melancholic, and enchanting. Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1933, he grew up a quiet, introspective child, loving Marvel comics and science fiction, both of which would later influence and infuse his work. After discovering music in his late teens with his elder brother Alan, Shorter moved from clarinet to tenor sax before taking a music education course at New York University, where his evenings were spent checking out Lester Young and Charlie Parker, but also the 'cool school' likes of Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh. Then after two years in the US army, Shorter was recruited into Maynard Ferguson's big band along with future collaborator Joe Zawinul, before joining Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1959, eventually becoming their musical director and infusing Blakey's straight-ahead sound with a curious nocturnal intensity.

The run of Blue Note albums Shorter recorded between 1964's *Night Dreamer* and 1974's *Moto Grosso Feio* (actually recorded in 1970) could easily occupy all of the 10 slots in this How To Buy, being as they are some of the most daring, experimental yet lyrically beautiful sides of music recorded for that incredible label during its heyday. The challenge here has been to capture the breadth and scope of Shorter's graceful genius beyond that astonishing decade, taking in his significant contributions to Blakey's Jazz Messengers but also to Miles Davis, with whom he played between 1965 and 1967, bringing an abstract, roiling expressionism to Davis's post-bop futurism. Then there is his work with Joe Zawinul and Miroslav Vitous in '70s fusion pioneers Weather Report and his often-overlooked post-Blue Note releases, especially those recorded between 1980 and his death. It can't hope to cover everything, and it's bound to overlook somebody's favourite Shorter recording, but hopefully it will provide a jumping off point for exploring the works of one of the most musically beguiling jazz composers, who passed on March 2.

> "One of the most musically beguiling jazz composers."

Getty (2)

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Wayne Shorter LPs. Next month we want your Keith Jarrett Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Keith Jarrett' and we'll print the best comments.

Wayne Shorter
Native Dancer

10 Wayne Shorter
Native Dancer

COLUMBIA, 1975

You say: **"Funky, Brazilian-jazz fusion collaboration with Milton Nascimento. Great line-up and superb pieces. Diana is one of my favourite Shorter compositions." Liam Branaghan, via Twitter**

Shorter's love of South American music, inspired by his marriage to Portuguese actress Ana Maria Patricio, had already resulted in such extraordinary compositions as Feio on Miles Davis's 1970 LP *Bitches Brew*, but this 1974 collaboration with singers Milton Nascimento and Flora Purim, percussionist Airto Moreira and a rarely-better Herbie Hancock, is the sound of the saxophonist's complete immersion in the sound. Famously dismissed as "bland samba" in the Penguin Jazz Guide, it is, in fact, a gorgeous, seamless blend of Nascimento's forlorn falsetto with Shorter's neo-Coltrane sax solos.

THE
ALL
SEEING
EYE
WAYNE
SHORTER

4 Wayne Shorter
The All Seeing Eye

BLUE NOTE, 1966

You say: **"It's challenging, it captures and explores the darkness in life while somehow managing to fill me with hope." Sallystardust, via Twitter**

Shorter's Blue Note sound at its most abstract. In addition to the piano and rhythm section trio of Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Joe Chambers, Shorter's four-horn attack included Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, James Spaulding on alto sax, Grachan Moncur III on trombone and, on the final track, Shorter's brother Alan on flugelhorn. From the title track's wild crash'n'rumble – a reference to God's omniscience – it is the sound of Shorter referencing his teachers (Coltrane, Blakey, Ornette) and utilising Biblical imagery to create a sort of metaphysical free bop, the unique suspended sound of roiling chaos, creation and in-the-moment wild invention.

WAYNE SHORTER
MOTO GROSSO FEIO

9 Wayne Shorter
Moto Grosso Feio

BLUE NOTE, 1974

You say: "I've been raving about this album for years [and] almost pursued a PhD in that period of jazz circa '69-73. This album was what drove my interest." Jon Opstad, via Twitter

To be heard alongside its equally essential sister LP *Odyssey Of Iska* (both produced by Duke Pearson on August 26, 1970) and 1969's *Super Nova*, this is the sound of Shorter with one foot in modern composition and one in the kind of cosmic fusion he would develop with Weather Report. With a killer line-up of John McLaughlin on electric guitar, Ron Carter and Dave Holland on bass, cello and acoustic guitar (!), Chick Corea on percussion, Jack DeJohnette on thumb piano (!!) and 19-year-old female drummer Micheline Pelzer. It's an album that exists somewhere between Miles's haunting work with Gil Evans and a kind of deep space tropicàlia.

alegria
WAYNE
SHORTER

8 Wayne Shorter
Alegria

VERVE, 2003

You say: "A lot of people will talk about Wayne's 20th century output, but this is my personal favourite, and one the most beautiful recordings I've ever heard." Matt Parker, via Twitter

For his first all-acoustic album in 35 years, Shorter augmented his live quartet (bassist John Patitucci, drummer Brian Blade, pianist Danilo Perez) with pianist Brad Mehldau, Weather Report percussionist Alex Acuña and overdubs of himself. It's an eclectic mix of the new with reinterpretations of his '60s compositions and standards which the 70-year-old saxophonist combines into an eclectic blend of the lyrical, intimate, introspective and joyous. Standouts include a luminous version of folk standard She Moved Through The Fair and the cheeky quotes of Rodgers & Hart's Where Or When inside the Third Wave abstractions of Orbits.

WEATHER REPORT
SWEETNIGHTER

7 Weather Report
Sweetnighter

COLUMBIA, 1973

You say: "With Weather Report's *Sweetnighter* Wayne Shorter showed that heaven is a place on earth." Crabapple, via Twitter

The third studio LP from Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter's jazz-fusion collective finds Shorter weaving ethereal motifs around the Austrian keyboardist's Rhodes electric piano and single-chord ARP drones, the duo's mesmerising interplay framed inside a driving, double-drummer, proto-hip-hop beat. Described by the saxophonist as "an attempt to stay away from the ethereal [and] selfish", it's not an album you seek out to hear Shorter as soloist and improviser. The sound of genius as collaborator, tone poet and a tantric moodist in the '70s Miles style, adding cosmic Marvel comic colours to the hypnotic low-bass outlines of Zawinul's "new commercial sound".

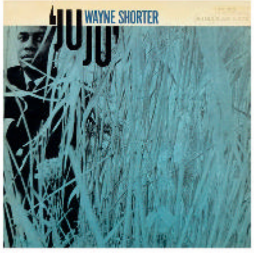
FREE
FOR ALL
ART BLAKEY
& THE JAZZ MESSENGERS
FREDDIE HUBBARD
CURTIS FULLER
WAYNE SHORTER
CEDAR WALTON
REGINALD WORKMAN

6 Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers
Free For All

BLUE NOTE, 1965

You say: "It could be all the distortion, but I love the energy on this. The most blistering, aggressive thing Shorter ever did." Russjazz, via Twitter

Featuring two Shorter compositions (the title track and aptly named Hammer Head), this February 1964 Messengers session finds him at his most blisteringly unrestrained. The three-horn set-up of Freddie Hubbard (trumpet) Curtis Fuller (trombone) and Shorter on tenor sax repeatedly vie for pole position, with audible encouragement from Blakey. Hubbard is cool and syncopated, Fuller deep and soulful, while Shorter repeatedly soars to visceral peaks of in-the-red lyricism. Intense, cacophonous, exhilarating, it's arguably the closest Blakey's mid-'60s hard bop got to free jazz.



5 Wayne Shorter
JuJu

BLUE NOTE, 1965

You say: "Top-tier Shorter for me. You can choose to puzzle over exactly how he does what he does or just bask in its beauty. I choose the latter." Chris Sachs, via e-mail

Perhaps because he's playing with the rhythm section of McCoy Tyner, Reggie Workman and Elvin Jones, this album tends to be regarded as a homage to Coltrane, with Shorter demoted to the status of mere acolyte. However, this might be Shorter at his most individual, idiosyncratic and mystical. Recorded after his time with Blakey's Jazz Messengers and prior to a six-year stint with Miles's quintet and inspired by west African and Far Eastern religious rituals and modal Arabian patterns, this is a deep, thoughtful, mystical LP, Shorter's six compositions a masterclass in both hauntingly beautiful melodies and joyful abstract expressionism.

MILES DAVIS QUINTET
MILES
SMILES

3 Miles Davis
Miles Smiles

COLUMBIA, 1967

You say: "Hearing *Miles Smiles* at 16 was as shocking and exciting as any punk record. It sounded discordant and aggressive, but also catchy and fun. Shorter's compositions and sax lines led the way." Jeff Billington, via Twitter

Shorter played consistently with Miles Davis's group from 1964 to 1970, from 1965's brash, intense *Miles In Berlin* to the electric overdrive of 1970's revolutionary *Live At The Fillmore East*. But perhaps the best example of their collaboration is this deliciously perplexing record. In addition to deceptively simple future standard Footprints, Shorter's compositions (Orbits; Circle; Dolores) are complex and enigmatic, imbued with a vaporous air of modernist mystery that contrasts perfectly with Miles's stabbing horn and the youthful drive of Tony Williams and Ron Carter's rhythm section.

ADAM'S APPLE
WAYNE SHORTER
HERBIE HANCOCK
REGINALD WORKMAN
JOE CHAMBERS

2 Wayne Shorter
Adam's Apple

BLUE NOTE, 1966

You say: "*Adam's Apple* is always a joy. Everything is perfectly balanced, and it sounds like everyone is having a ball." Natural Conker, via Twitter

An introspective quartet set with Herbie Hancock on piano, Reggie Workman on bass and Joe Chambers on drums. Shorter's sinuous sax patterns subtly entwine with Hancock's dazzlingly light scales and Workman and Chambers' delicate all-but-funk rhythmic framework. With Shorter as the solo horn player, it's an album of dark, expansive spaces and, like so many of Shorter's LPs, numerous hidden depths and emotional complexities, meaning it can be listened to as a late-night calmative, an abstract puzzle or both. It also included Shorter's one true jazz standard, Footprints, later recorded by the Miles Davis quintet for 1967's *Miles Smiles*.

4194 BLUE NOTE
"Speak No Evil"
WAYNE
SHORTER
Freddie Hubbard / Herbie Hancock / Ron Carter
Elvin Jones

1 Wayne Shorter
Speak No Evil

BLUE NOTE, 1966

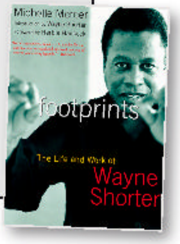
You say: "Shorter as leader? *Speak No Evil* is a standout in an exceptional field." Nigel Wallis, via Twitter

A post-bop masterpiece that begins resolutely in the world of hard bop with the upbeat opening groove of Witch Hunt before evolving into something darker, more brooding, more abstract. Recorded on Christmas Eve, 1964, with Jazz Messengers alumnus Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, Herbie Hancock on piano and a Ron Carter/Elvin Jones rhythm section, it's inspired by "misty landscapes …wild flowers… strange, dimly-seen shapes… folklore and witch burnings," said Shorter, specifically referring to Witch Hunt. While a certain hazy, harmonic mystery does imbue much of the album – from the nursery rhyme progression of Infant Eyes, to the stalking patterns of Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum – it's juxtaposed with a rhythmic and melodic lightness. This mix of simplicity and complexity defines Shorter's genius in general, an ability to create music that feels simultaneously straightforward and utterly revolutionary.

NOW DIG THIS

SEARCH FOR THE NEW LAND
LEE MORGAN

It would be remiss if we did not point out that there are numerous other solo LPs and recordings with Miles Davis, Art Blakey and Weather Report that would fit into most people's definition of great Shorter albums, but you must check out his exquisite playing on Lee Morgan's 1966 masterpiece, *Search For The New Land*. The essential Wayne Shorter book is Footprints by New York times and NPR jazz critic Michelle Mercer. Although an authorised biography, it's also a surprisingly frank and honest account of the ever-mercurial jazz saxophonist. There is no definitive Shorter documentary, but The Language Of The Unknown, Guido Lukoschek's 2012 profile of the man and his final quartet as they prepare for a concert in Paris in 2012 is suitably cryptic, gnomic and intimate.



Lucinda Williams: she asked for water, she got gasoline.

Getty

Queen of The South

An "unsugar-coated" chronicle of Lucinda's life and work. By Sylvie Simmons.

Don't Tell Anybody The Secrets I Told You

★★★★

Lucinda Williams

SIMON & SCHUSTER. £20

IT BEGINS with booze: a sunny afternoon in Louisiana, a young Lucinda pouring cocktails for her dad. A darker picture follows of her mother, a closet alcoholic, who had a mental illness she would "drift in and out of like Sylvia Plath". Therapists aside, Lucinda Williams hadn't talked much about her childhood before now, writing songs about it instead – Bus To Baton Rouge; Car Wheels On A Gravel Road. Like Larkin said, they fuck you up, but Lucinda loved her parents and dedicated this book to them. From her mother, who played piano, she got music, and from her father, a poet and literary professor, she got words. The university tenure system that required them moving city to city gave her an aptitude for life on the road, and the spina bifida she was born with made her a fighter.

In her early teens Williams taught herself to play guitar. Listening to records was an "almost religious" act. Leaving school early, she got her first singing gig at a dive on Bourbon Street. Her dad – now remarried to one of his former students – knew someone who set up an audition for her at Opryland. She failed. Might have been the same issue that kept coming up in her career: too rock for country, too country for rock.

"It took me a long time to get to where I am now," she writes, but "I didn't give up." There was her covers album of traditional folk and blues, then an album of her own songs, *Happy Woman Blues*, that critics acclaimed, and record companies ignored – until 1988 when UK label Rough Trade released her self-titled official debut. "And my life changed": her song Passionate Kisses was covered by Mary Chapin Carpenter and won the Grammy for Best Country Song. Williams didn't go to the awards ceremony; she felt like she "didn't belong".

Being an outlier comes up often. Sometimes she couldn't fit in, sometimes she wouldn't. She's right that there were different rules for women singer-songwriters, especially when it came to sexual content. "I've been called an 'erotic' songwriter," she writes. "I don't disagree." We learn of her taste in "poet on a motorcycle" types. We also hear about the female fan who sat on the edge of the stage, masturbating, while Williams sang Essence. She writes about several men in her life – many of them musicians, a by-product of spending most of your life in recording studios or on the road – but has the good manners or sense not to overshare. In 2009 she married her second husband, Tom Overby. Her first marriage to The Long Ryders' Greg Sowders lasted 18 months, but Lucinda and Overby, now her manager, are happily together 14 years on.

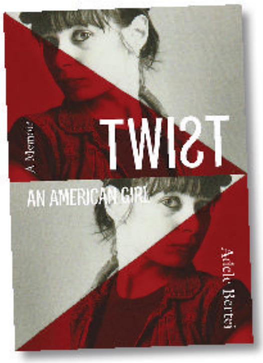
An engaging read, it's as "unsugar-coated" as she said, apart from the pointless, aphorism-filled Postscript. And it's beautifully written – the same two words her dad used to describe a note she left him in the final chapter of his life and her book.

> "Too rock for country, too country for rock."

Don't Tell Anybody The Secrets I Told You
Lucinda Williams

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Her relationship with her family is "something I've spent many hours in therapy trying to process."
- Though she's a professor's daughter, Williams didn't finished high school.
- One of her best side jobs as a penniless musician was handing out sausage samples in a supermarket in LA.
- Her "difficult" reputation in the music business came from refusing to be reshaped into something she wasn't. "People had learned not to try to fuck with me because it's not going to work, ever."
- She met her husband of 14 years, Tom Overby, at the Whisky A Go Go where they were both watching Hank Williams III. They married on-stage in Minneapolis at one of her shows – her poet father officiated and wrote the wedding vows – and honeymooned in her tour bus.



Twist: An American Girl

★★★★

Adele Bertei

ZE BOOKS. £19.99

A pulsing, feverish memoir from the Ze Records alumnus.

Long before her later life as an author and pop co-writer (for Scritti Politti, Jellybean, Tears For Fears) and youth in New York's No Wave scene with openly gay all-female punk-funk band The Bloods, Adele Bertei was navigating a tough childhood, first in the troubled care of her mother, then nun-run reformatories and foster homes. In Twist: An American Girl, Bertei excavates the gnarly roots of her life up to 1973, writing in a startling present-tense style that's simultaneously poetic and no-nonsense. Music presents itself as a lifeline throughout, from Lulu's To Sir With Love accompanying same-sex slow dances, to songs from Hair and Cabaret giving Bertei a place to perform. Fans of Viv Albertine, Mark Lanegan and Cosey Fanni Tutti's recent books will find a thrilling new voice here.

Jude Rogers

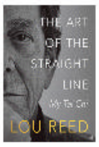
The Art Of The Straight Line: My Tai Chi

★★★★

Lou Reed

FABER. £30

Compelling, surprising portrait of a quest for physical and spiritual power.



Odd book, this. For a start, it's not exactly by Lou Reed: his voice appears in old interviews and e-mails, but mostly The Art Of The Straight Line is a patchwork of posthumous conversations with his friends and associates, who explain the intimidating genius via his passion for Tai Chi. The story that emerges is one of how martial arts replaced Reed's more problematic addictions in the early '80s, and how Tai Chi sustained him through his final illness. But also, we get a new picture of a legendarily difficult man: a kind and supportive friend, hungry to find calm; "A mountain of scar tissue. And flowering," according to Anohni. Reed exhorts Iggy Pop to cut out calories, does goofy dances for Laurie Anderson, dislikes hotel rooms where he can see cranes outside the window, requests "Chinese weaponry from the 16th century" from tour promoters (the book contains many, many photos of Reed with swords). And, finally, dies with the dignity and "pure awareness" he had worked for so assiduously. "'Light'," says Anderson, "was his last word."

John Mulvey

Same Old Girl: Staying Alive, Staying Sane, Staying Myself

★★★★

Sylvia Patterson

FLEET. £20

Music writer's second memoir centres on her cancer: "the colossal swizz of it all…"

Sylvia Patterson
Same Old Girl

A hilarious entertainer, inspired stylist and romantic idealist, one of music journalism's towering talents Sylvia Patterson has long looked to pop for the big answers in the belief that "something beautiful" glimpsed in a "flashbulb moment" was a "prophecy", as she approvingly quotes Lester Bangs in her previous memoir, 2016's brilliant I'm Not With The Band. Always more interested in the human trapped in the star-making machinery than how it all came together in the studio, she's had high times but none lower than a diagnosis of breast cancer just as Covid swept the world. Unsparing yet ultimately uplifting, every sentence cuts a caper even as it delivers a gruelling detail or profound insight. Telly, podcasts and snooker get her through the worst but it's an explosion of music and dancing that crystallises, in the awful irony of someone else's wake, not just our reasons to live but who we are.

Mat Snow

To Anyone Who Ever Asks: The Life, Music, And Mystery Of Connie Converse

Howard Fishman

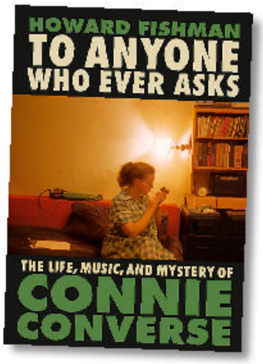
★★★

WILDFIRE/DUTTON. £25

The ur-singer-songwriter (arguably) becomes a person in full.

The core of Connie Converse's fabled songs – alien acoustic transmissions from New York's Greenwich Village in the early '50s, years before its singer-songwriter archetype existed – was always mischief. Her uncanny picking patterns, her licentious boastfulness, her solitary existence: Converse's music, which was finally distributed 60 years after it was made, mastered subversive aplomb. For many years and in multiple media, from the New Yorker to an album of Converse's salvaged piano tunes, musician and writer Howard Fishman has worked to connect that sense to the person behind the songs. A considerable challenge, given that she vanished entirely in 1974. This long-gestating Converse corpus succeeds through Javert-like doggedness and deduction. She becomes not just a prescient musician but also a peculiar sister, a brilliant polymath, an insightful diarist. Fishman struggles, though, when he turns this tiny tale into too much – an indictment of genre, a reductive survey of bygone cultural currents, a guerrilla battle against modernity. It's a massive and fascinating feat, nevertheless, of journalistic endurance.

Grayson Haver Currin



It's The Truth: Making The Only Ones

★★★

Simon Wright

SHAKSPEARE EDITORIAL. £12.99

Extraordinary backstory to Peter Perrett combo's debut.

IT'S THE TRUTH
Making The Only Ones
Simon Wright

It's well documented that Peter Perrett funded The Only Ones via his 'day job' as a drug dealer, meandering for six-plus years before nailing his first album. This fan's investigation reveals no gory details on the narcotics front, with Perrett himself a slightly elusive voice. Instead, there's ripping testimony on how the other three landed up with him: "terrifically Midlands" drummer Mike Kellie via prog nearly-men Spooky Tooth, bassist Alan Mair's north-of-the-border mid-'60s stardom with The Beatstalkers and friendship with David Bowie (1967's Little Bombardier was written for Mair's son), and eloquent guitarist John Perry's graft in Bristol wedding bands. Gigging bolstered Perrett's confidence and his connections lifted them (Keith Richards almost produced; Sandy Denny offered to sing back-up), but The Only Ones' musicianly diversity ultimately stumped new wave customers ("Height of punk? Start with a ballad," quips Perry), meaning even Another Girl, Another Planet didn't chart. Important conclusion: they didn't fail because of drugs.

Andrew Perry

Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma

★★★★

Claire Dederer

SCEPTRE. £20

What to do with the art of monstrous men, asks Seattle essayist.

Claire Dederer
Monsters
A Fan's Dilemma

Miles Davis, Phil Spector, Michael Jackson, Roman Polanski, Woody Allen? Can you hate the artist but love the art? That is the central question at the heart of Dederer's enthralling and self-reflexive collection of essays. At the heart of the book is Dederer's own relationship with complicated male artists "whose behaviour disrupts our ability to apprehend [their] work". Conceived at the height of #metoo, the book addresses the hard-to-resist pull of the art of bad men, how it is always in conflict with "the stain" of their actions and also, as in the case of Miles Davis, the undeniable beauty of the art bad men can create. Dederer also analyses the notion of the monstrous female artist ("the negligent mother") and whether awful people are driven to artistic greatness to make up for their loathsomeness, but ultimately it is a book that resists any grand unified theory, allowing the reader to still revel in the beauty and strangeness of great art made by bad people. "It doesn't make you a bad person," she writes. "You'll have to find some other way to accomplish that."

Andrew Male

Adele Bertei: her wave or no wave.

Ze Books

Mister Rock'n'roll: Little Richard, in 1971, setting the template for almost everything that was to follow.

Ready, set, go man go

Rock pioneer's life story focusing on his gender and ethnicity, but with too little vintage Richard for **Max Décharné**.

Little Richard: I Am Everything

★★★

Dir: Lisa Cortés

CNN FILMS. C/ST/DVD

"I AM THE originator," said Little Richard to the Hollywood crowd at the 1997 AMA awards, "I am the emancipator, I am the architect of rock'n'roll." A provocative statement, delivered with total assurance and considerable charm, like Ali telling interviewers "I am the greatest" it succeeds because it's essentially true. With his astonishing 1950s run of hits for the Specialty label, Richard set the template for almost everything that was to follow.

This feature-length documentary by Lisa Cortés sets out, both in her selection of vintage material and choice of contemporary interviewees – including a Yale professor, various other scholars, and an ethnomusicologist – to examine Little Richard's story in the context of his sexuality, his ethnicity and also his religion. It's a valid and often overlooked approach, but although its trailer bills it as the 'untold story', long-time fans will struggle to find much new here.

A year after his first hit, Tutti Frutti (1955), Richard was brilliantly captured in colour and Cinemascope singing three songs in a big-budget Hollywood film, The Girl Can't Help It, and if you wanted to convince anyone of his genius in two minutes flat, simply show them the part where he performs Ready Teddy. Case closed. Yet frustratingly, that is precisely what the documentary refuses to do with this or his other ultra-suave appearances in Don't Knock The Rock (1956) and Mister Rock'n'Roll (1957) – teasing with brief five-second bursts before switching to something else or showing the visuals without the sound. When a song's audio is finally run in full (over the end titles), they use a later re-recording of Tutti Frutti rather than the matchless original 1955 Specialty version, which is like trying to illustrate the seismic mid-1970s impact of the Ramones by only using 1990s live material.

Always a hugely entertaining and uninhibited interviewee, Richard is seen here on chat shows such as those of Arsenio Hall, Tom Snyder, or Mike Douglas. He explains Tutti Frutti's bawdy roots to David Brenner in 1987, tells Donny and Marie Osmond in 2000 about his father throwing him out of the house for being gay, yet informs David Letterman in 1982 that "God made Adam and Eve, not Steve". Unfortunately, none of these dates or presenters are identified on screen, so the narrative jumps around the decades with little to guide the viewer.

The documentary relies heavily on unlabelled footage from Philip Casson's phenomenal Granada TV live filmed performance, It's Little Richard, shot in Manchester in 1963, and also from David Hinton's equally fine 1985 British television South Bank Show documentary about Richard. Programme consultant for the latter was Charles White, author of the landmark 1984 biography The Life And Times Of Little Richard, hailed by the Times Literary Supplement as having 'moments to "make your liver quiver, your bladder splatter, and your knees freeze"'. Cortés's film mentions the book's appearance, but does not credit White, as if Richard wrote it himself, an ungracious omission.

Overall, an interesting yet uneven consideration of the life of one of the true pioneers, hampered by some puzzling editorial decisions.

"Richard was a hugely entertaining and uninhibited interviewee."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Drummer Tony Newman from Sounds Incorporated recounts backing Richard on a tour of England in 1962: Richard would jump off the piano and collapse motionless on the floor. Dead silence. The band would ask if there was a doctor in the house, then he'd jump up and tear into Good Golly Miss Molly.
- In a clip from her chat show, Joan Rivers asks Richard about his touring days: Was there a lot of sex going on? He replies, "Oh yes! Night and day! All night…"
- John Waters says that "Little Richard's moustache I wear to this day for over 50 years in a twisted tribute to him".

Getty

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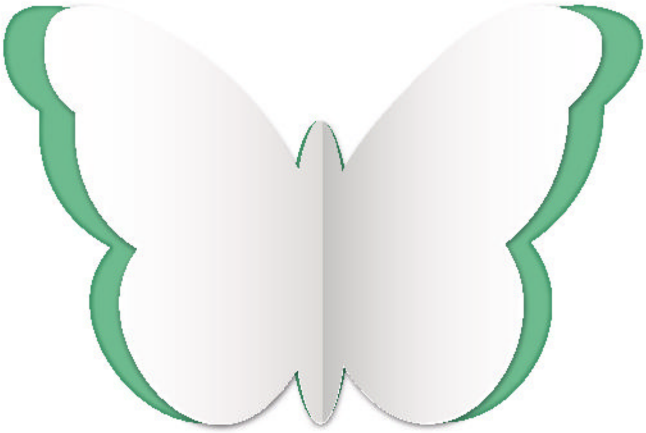
Source: FAO and UNEP, The State of World's Forests, 2020



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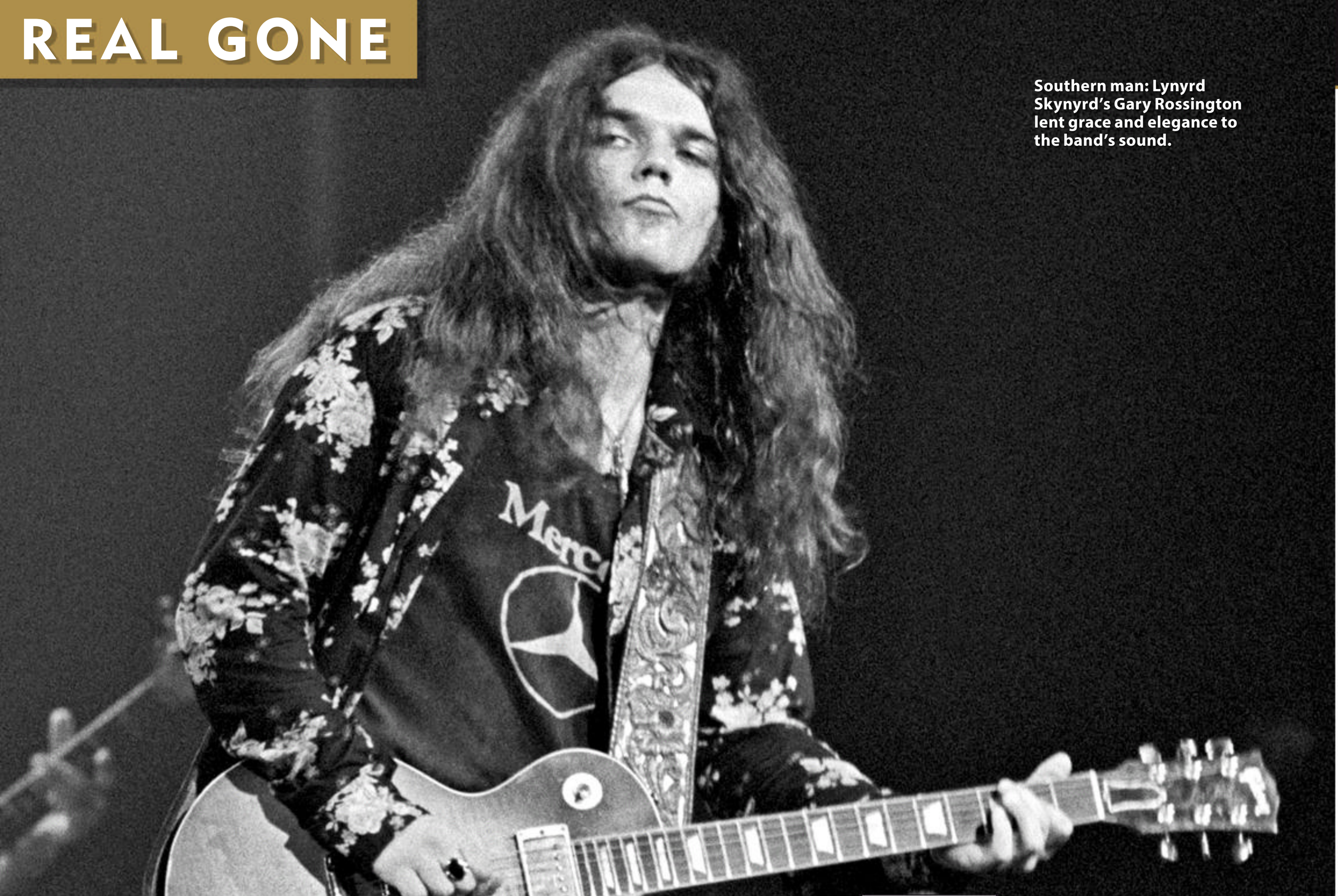


Southern man: Lynyrd Skynyrd's Gary Rossington lent grace and elegance to the band's sound.

THE LEGACY

The Album: *(Pronounced 'Lĕh-'nérd 'Skin-'nérd*) (MCA, 1973)

The Sound: Archetypal Southern rock of taste and sophistication, as Skynyrd's dust-dry sound built upon the foundations laid by The Allman Brothers. Rossington's measured approach reined in Skynyrd's triple-guitar line-up, ensuring Van Zant's earthy tales could breathe.

I Must Be Travelling On Now

Gary Rossington, Lynyrd Skynyrd's final keeper of the flame, left us on March 5.

IN NOVEMBER 1975, when Lynyrd Skynyrd closed their live Old Grey Whistle Test set with epic song of farewell Freebird, Gary Rossington's slide-guitar lent grace and elegance. He had double-tracked the studio version's fluid motifs in 1973 aged 21; impressive, given the intonational challenges of bottleneck.

Signed to MCA by Al Kooper after rejections from nine other companies, Skynyrd's import and legacy was quickly defined. Firstly by 1974 Rossington co-write Sweet Home Alabama – a talismanic, pointed reply to Neil Young's accusatory songs Southern Man and Alabama – and secondly by the tragic October 1977 air crash which robbed Rossington of bandmates Ronnie Van Zant, Steve Gaines and Cassie Gaines, and left him, a survivor, with four broken limbs and a mission.

> "I like to keep their dream alive."
> GARY ROSSINGTON

"I like to keep their dream alive," Rossington told Florida TV station News 4JAX in 2020, by which time he was Skynyrd's last surviving original member. "We didn't realise what we had created back then; they didn't live long enough to see Freebird go classic."

Born on December 4, 1951 in Jacksonville, Florida, Rossington was raised by his early-widowed mother Berniece and later named his favourite '59 Les Paul after her. He met Skynyrd's Ronnie Van Zant (vocals) and Bob Burns (drums) while playing on a rival baseball team, and cited Van Zant as a father figure who had taught him how to drive, and about girls. They played together from 1964, first as The Noble Five, then as The One Per Cent, and from 1969 as Lynyrd Skynyrd, paying "tongue-in-cheek homage" to Leonard Skinner, high school gym teacher and enforcer of hair-length regulations for male students.

Admired by players as diverse as ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and Metallica's James Hetfield, Rossington's economical style helped define Skynyrd classics such as Tuesday's Gone and Gimme Three Steps, while his co-writes included Simple Man and the gnarly, swamp-funk title track of 1976's *Gimme Back My Bullets*.

After the '77 air crash, Rossington had steel rods inserted into his right arm and right leg and became addicted to painkillers, but by 1979 he'd formed The Rossington Collins Band with fellow Skynyrd guitarist Allen Collins.

Active with Skynyrd again from 1987 after Ronnie Van Zant's younger brother Johnny stepped up as frontman, Rossington became ever-more valuable to a close-knit Southern rock dynasty adapting to survive. But his heart attack in October 2015 led to two Skynyrd shows being cancelled, and he had further emergency heart surgery in 2021.

When Rossington died at home in Milton, Georgia aged 71, Free's Paul Rodgers was among the first to pay tribute to "a close friend for over 50 years." The guitarist is survived by his wife Dale and their two daughters, and would doubtless be pleased to know that Lynyrd Skynyrd have not fallen silent. The group played its first show without him at Florida Strawberry Festival on March 12, paying heartfelt and ever-more poignant tribute on Freebird.

James McNair

Getty

David Lindley

Virtuosic maxi-instrumentalist

BORN 1944

IF THE CONTRAPTION in David Lindley's hands had strings, the mutton-chopped, long-haired hippy decked out in polyester shirts would inevitably master it: guitar (notably slide), lap steel, cittern, banjo, upright bass, saz, mandolin, violin, charango, oud, zither, dobro and even more obscure axes like the cümbüş and the Hardanger fiddle – the national instrument of Norway.

As a California kid, he became an ace bluegrass banjoist and fiddler and in 1966 with Chris Darrow and others, co-founded Kaleidoscope, the Los Angeles rock group that blended Middle Eastern sounds and psychedelia. While commercial nonentities, the band were underground heroes and played on *Songs Of Leonard Cohen* – the songwriter's debut. After Kaleidoscope's dissolution, Lindley joined rock shouter Terry Reid's band in the UK for a couple of years, followed by a return to the States to back up Jackson Browne from 1972 through 1980. In addition to his instrumental multiplicity, he added tenor harmonies – that's his falsetto on Browne's popular cover of Stay that wraps *Running On Empty*.

Lindley formed his own band El Rayo-X in 1981. They released their eponymously titled debut and became a smart-rock fave that highlit the leader's chipmunk vocals, wacky wit, eclectic chops, melodic hooks and global rhythms encompassing ska, reggae, zydeco, Tex-Mex and Cajun. In addition to also touring as a solo act variously accompanied by percussionists Hani Naser and Wally Ingram, he became an in-demand session man with Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, Warren Zevon, Crosby & Nash, Ry Cooder, Rod Stewart, Curtis Mayfield, Dolly Parton, Iggy Pop, John Prine, Ben Harper, Springsteen, James Taylor, Joe Walsh, Henry Kaiser and others.

"His playing was so emotional and immediate," longtime collaborator Browne posted in a eulogy, recalling the first time he and Lindley played together in 1969. "It cast a spell over me and everyone there."

Michael Simmons

David Lindley: string theorist.

Bill Daniel, Getty (4)

Fuzzy Haskins: the light of the P-Funk party.

Fuzzy Haskins

P-Funk singer

BORN 1941

WEST VIRGINIA-BORN Clarence Haskins joined George Clinton's New Jersey doo-wop quartet The Parliaments in 1960. The two stayed together in the multi-headed rock and soul outfit that evolved sideways from Parliament into Funkadelic in 1968. An integral, mikestand-straddling, eyeball-sunglasses-sporting part of the P-Funk experience, Haskins contributed songs, gutsy vocals, guitar and drums to '70s albums including *Maggot Brain*, *Standing On The Verge Of Getting It On* and *Mothership Connection*, credited variously with 'Berserker Octave Vocals' and 'Werewolf Vocals'. In conflict with Clinton, he left the year after his solo debut, *A Whole Nother Thang*, in 1976. He later played with a rival formation of Funkadelic that ended in a court case, sang gospel music, and performed with P-Funk reunion Original P. In 1997, he was present alongside his Parliament-Funkadelic brethren when Prince inducted them into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. "[Fuzzy] was always a light at the party," said his old bandmate Bootsy Collins. "He would give you the shirt off his back."

Ian Harrison

"Fuzzy would give you the shirt off his back."

BOOTSY COLLINS

Simon Emmerson

Global music conductor

BORN 1956

AS SIMON BOOTH, London-born Simon Emmerson played with post-punk bands including Scritti Politti before forming jazz-pop band Weekend with Young Marble Giants' Alison Statton in 1981. From 1984 to '91, he mixed social activism with jazz, Latin and soul with Working Week. Instrumental in forming musicians-for-Labour collective Red Wedge, he also played on Everything But The Girl's debut *Eden*, became an in-demand producer working with Baaba Maal, Sinéad O'Connor, Robert Plant and Peter Gabriel among others, and, in 1995 founded pan-globalists the Afro Celt Sound System. With The Imagined Village from 2004, meanwhile, he reconfigured folk music for the multicultural age, and produced ambient 'spa music' as musical director at Lush cosmetics from 2010. Generous of spirit, he was also a keen birdwatcher, a dog walker and a druid. "I can see so many ways in which his aspirations, musicality and determination have touched all of us, changed things for the better and made our lives richer," said Peter Gabriel in tribute.

Lois Wilson

Glenn 'Spot' Lockett

Hardcore punk's key producer

BORN 1951

FUSION-LOVER Spot was an unlikely candidate for SST Records' in-house producer, but his jazz-informed instinct for capturing the live moment benefited the no-budget hardcore scene. He offered his services to SST owner Greg Ginn after witnessing Ginn's band Black Flag start a riot at a gig in Polliwog Park in Los Angeles, having passed themselves off as a Fleetwood Mac covers band. His canny studio skills enabled Flag and their labelmates to thriftily innovate the sound of '80s US underground rock, producing enduring masterpieces by the Meat Puppets, the Descendents and the Minutemen. Hüsker Dü's ambitious double concept album *Zen Arcade*, meanwhile, was recorded and mixed in a dizzying 100 hours; "none of it was perfect, but we just had to get it done," Spot said. He later moved to Texas, joined the city's raucous Irish folk scene and started his own label, No Auditions.

Stevie Chick

Jim Gordon: an impeccable technician and troubled soul.

Jim Gordon

Drummer, murderer

BORN 1945

THE STUTTER AND swing beneath Carly Simon's You're So Vain. The oft-sampled break at the centre of the Incredible Bongo Band's Apache. The driving drums and drifting piano beneath Layla. These are just three points in the incredibly prolific but tragically short career of Jim Gordon, who died at 77 in a California prison medical facility in March, just less than 40 years after bludgeoning and stabbing his mother to death.

Born in Los Angeles, Gordon was a drumming wunderkind, turning pro by joining the Everly Brothers while still a teen in the early '60s. He soon become Hal Blaine's alternate of choice, an esteemed Wrecking Crew designation that put him behind the kit for some of music's biggest marquee acts for the next decade-plus. "He became the main guy," Jim Keltner later confessed, "because he was better." Gordon played on *Imagine* and *All Things Must Pass*, with Zappa and Waits and Newman, on *Pet Sounds* and *Pretzel Logic*. He partied and performed hard during the Mad Dogs & Englishmen Tour, then soon started Derek & The Dominos with Clapton and crew. An impeccable technician with an expansive range, Gordon was rock's go-to drummer in a moment of exuberant stylistic metastasis.

But in the six years before he murdered his mother, Gordon checked himself into a psychiatric hospital at least 14 times. Haunted by "command hallucinations" since childhood and eventually diagnosed with acute paranoid schizophrenia, Gordon's health, career, and relationships languished as he struggled with voices. He beat then-girlfriend Rita Coolidge and nearly strangled his second wife, Renée Armand, a sporadic escalation that led him to his mother's doorstep in June 1983.

Gordon was sentenced to 16 years with the possibility of parole for second-degree murder, despite his diagnosis. He never attended a parole hearing.

Grayson Haver Currin

Robin Lumley

Fusion keyboardist

BORN 1948

PLYMOUTH-BORN, Robin Lumley graduated with a degree in Television Studies from Exeter University and played drums in local bands before moving to London. He reached the final of a Melody Maker talent contest in 1970, but soon after switched to keyboards and was hired, with one day's notice, by David Bowie to play on the Ziggy Stardust tour in June 1972. In 1974, Lumley joined Phil Collins's jazz-rock side-project Brand X, recording six albums with the band between 1976 and 1982. During that period, Lumley also branched out into production, working with Rod Argent, Bill Bruford, and the US soft-rock trio Orleans, and co-produced 1975's star-packed rock adaption of Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf*. He was also the second cousin of actress Joanna Lumley. In 2013, he published his book Tay Bridge Disaster: The People's Story, on the tragic railway bridge collapse of 1879. His great-grandfather, he noted, was almost a passenger on the Dundee train which was lost with no survivors.

Charles Waring

Steve Mackey

Pulp bassist, producer, artist

BORN 1966

IN 1987, STEVE Mackey's band Trolley Dog Shag appeared alongside Sheffield art-pop purveyors Pulp on the *See You Later, Agitator!* cassette, released by unemployed musicians' organisation Dolebusters. But his image, interests and aesthetic meant Pulp were a band he was born to join. A film graduate from the Royal College Of Art, the bassist was present from the late '80s, offering a mysterious, non-speaking corollary to alpha-nerd frontman Jarvis Cocker. The glory years began after Common People was a smash in 1995, with Number 1 albums *Different Class* (1995) and *This Is Hardcore* (1998) following. Pulp disbanded in 2002: Mackey went on to produce for M.I.A, Florence + The Machine and Marianne Faithfull, design sound installations for MOMA and the Louvre, play bass in the Pulp/Radiohead supergroup The Wyrd Sisters in the Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire movie, and worked as a photographer and video director. He reunited with Pulp from 2011 to 2013, but announced he would be sitting out of the group's summer 2023 shows. Paying tribute to their "beloved friend", Pulp said, "Steve made things happen."

Ian Harrison

> "Steve Mackey's image, interests and aesthetic meant Pulp were a band he was born to join."

Pulp bassist Steve Mackey: in a different class.

Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou

Ethiopian pianist and nun

BORN 1923

BORN INTO a wealthy family in Addis Ababa, the composer and pianist Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou left behind a slight body of recorded works, yet her life was the stuff of Hollywood biopics in the golden age. Sent abroad to learn violin, she sang for Haile Selassie in the 1930s; was a prisoner of war; the first woman employed by the Ethiopian civil service; and (along with her sister) a pioneering feminist. It is for her solo piano recordings – sacred music that sits between jazz and classical – that she will be remembered, however: her first EP was released in 1967; in 2006, a mesmeric collection was issued in the *Éthiopiques* series. Her royalties went to charity and she dedicated her life to God, becoming a nun in the 1940s and rarely absent from Jerusalem's Ethiopian Orthodox Church after 1984. She died nine months short of her centenary.

David Hutcheon

Lawrence Watson, Courtesy Buda Musique, Getty (2)

Mick Slattery

Founder Hawkwind guitar

BORN 1946

HE LEFT the group before their first LP, but Mick Slattery played an important role in launching Space Rock institution Hawkwind. Raised in Richmond, he played in The Compromise before joining old busker friend Dave Brock in bluesers The Famous Cure in 1967: after that group's demise it was Slattery who suggested their burgeoning freak ensemble, then called Group X, play at Notting Hill's All Saints Hall on August 29, 1969, after which they gained a management contract and mutated into Hawkwind Zoo. As he told band biographer Carol Clerk, Slattery also knew capital scenester Pete Meaden, who gave Brock his first acid trip. Prone to sudden departures, Slattery left the band in 1970 "to go to Morocco," a decision he admitted may have been premature. He later studied guitar making, played alongside other band alumni in the Nik Turner-led Space Ritual, and could be seen checking out his old band, still led by Brock, at gigs.

Ian Harrison

Bobby Caldwell

Blue eyed jazz-soul

BORN 1951

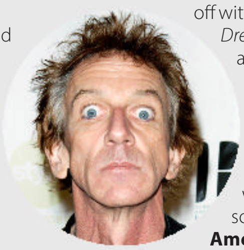
Bobby Caldwell: he did it all for love.

SINGER, WRITER and multi-instrumentalist Bobby Caldwell was born to a showbiz family in New York, raised in Miami and moved to Los Angeles in the early '70s to play rhythm guitar for Little Richard. Signed to TK Records subsidiary Clouds, soft rock and R&B met on his smooth 1979 45 What You Won't Do For Love. His label at first tried to play down the fact that Caldwell was white: the song, made available as a novel heart-shaped red vinyl disc, was a Top 10 US success. Caldwell later wrote film music and material for the likes of Boz Scaggs, Roberta Flack, Al Jarreau and others, provided samples for hip-hoppers, sang Sinatra and songs from the Big Band era, and was hailed as 'Mister AOR' in Japan, where he retained a loyal following. Apart from a mid-'80s lull, he continued to record regularly: his last album project, *Cool Uncle*, was released in 2015, and he played his last shows in early 2020.

Clive Prior

THEY ALSO SERVED

R&B SINGER **LEON HUGHES** (b.1930) was the last surviving original member of **The Coasters**. In 1956 and 1957, he and the group enjoyed US success with Leiber and Stoller-composed songs including Down In Mexico, Searchin' and Young Blood (the latter co-composed by Doc Pomus). He then left the band and formed **The Dukes** with fellow Coaster **Bobby Nunn**, and later sang with numerous formulations of his original group.



GUITARIST **TOM LEADON** (b.1952) formed **Mudcrutch** in 1970 alongside his teenage friend from Gainesville, Florida, **Tom Petty**. In 1972, Leadon left Mudcrutch and moved to Los Angeles, where his older brother Bernie had formed the **Eagles**. He played with **Linda Ronstadt** and wrote The Acacias Are Blooming (repurposed by the Eagles as Hollywood Waltz). Joining **Silver** on bass, Leadon later taught guitar in Nashville, before rejoining Mudcrutch for a tour and two self-titled albums in 2008 and 2016.

SONGWRITER, musician and producer **ROBERT HAIMER** (b.1954) formed the duo **Barnes & Barnes** with former child US TV actor **Bill Mumy** in 1970. In 1980 they broke through with the playful/psychotic whimsy Fish Heads, whose Bill Paxton-starring video was an MTV choice. They continued to record thereafter, signing off with 2021's *Pancake Dream*. The duo also produced records for **Wild Man Fischer** and **Crispin Glover**, and worked with soft rockers **America**.

BRITISH JAZZ mainstay **TONY COE** (b.1934) played clarinet, flute and saxophone. A pro from 17, he played with UK talents including **Humphrey Lyttelton**, **John Dankworth**, **Stan Tracey**, **Norma Winstone**, **Lol Coxhill**, **Derek Bailey**, **Steve Beresford** and **Georgie Fame**, and internationally with **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Stan Getz** and the **Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band**, as well as his own groups. His rock credits included **Paul McCartney**, **Caravan** and **John Martyn**'s *Solid Air*. His son is 6 Music DJ Gideon Coe.

REGGAE singer **JUNIOR ENGLISH** (b.1951) sang for **Prince Buster** in Jamaica before moving to Britain in 1964. After playing with **The Magnets** and **The Nighthawks**, he went solo for UK reggae hits produced by **Clem Bushay** (including 1980's After Tonight, as seen on **Steve McQueen**'s Small Axe episode Lovers Rock). His last LP was *U Make Me Happy* in 2010.

NICKNAMED 'LA TIGRESA,' Mexican entertainer **IRMA SERRANO** (b.1933) found fame as a ranchera singer in the '60s, making her debut with 1964's *La Nueva Intérprete De La Canción Ranchera (Mexico's Fiery New Folk Singer)*. Describing herself as "authentic and irreverent", she continued to record into the '80s and diversified into stage and screen acting, debuting in 1962's Santo Vs The Zombies with wrestler El Santo. She was elected to the Mexican Senate in 1994.

WEIRDOS guitar and co-founder **DIX DENNEY** (above left, b.1957) formed the influential early LA punks in 1975 with his brother John (their mother was actress Nora Denney, AKA Mrs Teavee in Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory). Greg Shaw's Bomp! released the first Weirdos single, Destroy All Music in 1977, followed by We Got The Neutron Bomb and two 12-inch EPs. They split in 1981 – Dix nearly joined the **Red Hot Chili Peppers** – but returned to activity in 1986. His other bands included **If-Then-Else** and **Thelonious Monster**; he was also an artist.

BASSIST **MICHAEL RHODES** (b.1953) played in bands in Austin and Memphis before moving to Nashville to record demos and play sessions in 1977. His credits included **Dolly Parton**, **Johnny Cash**, **Brian Wilson**, **Glen Campbell**, **Hank Williams Jr.**, **Etta James**, **Elton John**, **Steve Winwood** and many more. He also played with Rodney Crowell in **The Cicadas** and **The Notorious Cherry Bombs**, and, since 2013, was **Joe Bonamassa**'s bassist.

SAXOPHONIST **CARLOS GARNETT** (below, b.1938) played in Panama before moving to New York in 1962. From the late '60s he played with **Freddie Hubbard**, **Art Blakey**, **Charles Mingus**, **Pharoah Sanders** and **Miles Davis**, appearing on the latter's divisive 1972 *On The Corner*, and recorded solo. After an '80s hiatus, he returned with 1996's *Resurgence*. He went back to Panama in 2000.

NAPOLEON XIV (left, AKA Jerry Samuels, b.1938) achieved one-hit notoriety with the They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!, a US million-seller in 1966. A similarly-mental-illness-themed LP of the same name followed. He also wrote straight material which was covered by **Johnnie Ray**, **LaVern Baker**, **Neil Diamond** and **Sammy Davis Jr**, among others, and later worked as an agent in Philadelphia.

VOCALIST **HOWIE KANE** (b.1941) sang with Queens vocalising pop-rockers **Jay & The Americans** from 1960. The group's US Top 10s included She Cried (1962), Come A Little Bit Closer (1964), Cara Mia (1965) and This Magic Moment (1969). After their split in 1973, Kane was a social worker heading alcohol and drug programmes. He returned to the band in 2006 – new albums followed including 2011's *Keepin' The Music Alive* – and remained until his death.

WOODSTOCK soundtrack cover star **BOBBI ERCOLINE** (b.c.1949) appeared on the sleeve of 1970's triple-LP soundtrack to the three days of peace and music at Yasgur's Farm. Snapped by Life magazine's Burk Uzzle, the then-Bobbi Kelly was pictured wrapped in a quilt embracing her boyfriend Nick: the couple married in 1971, and were together for 54 years.

Jenny Bulley and Ian Harrison

Melissa Joseph, Photofest, Getty (2), Avalon.red

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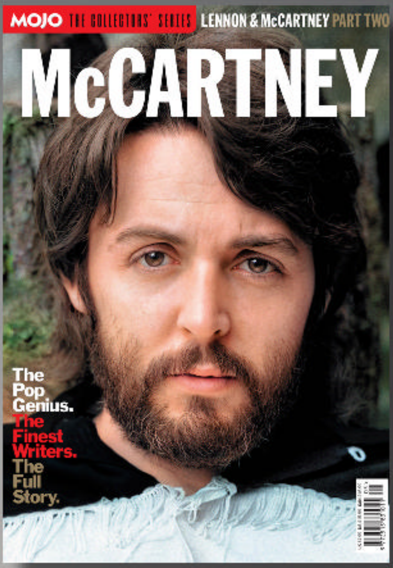
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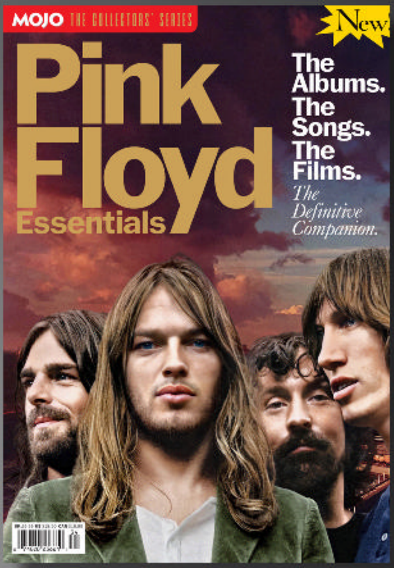
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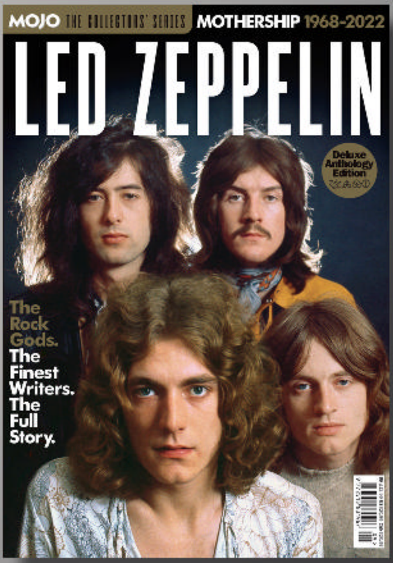
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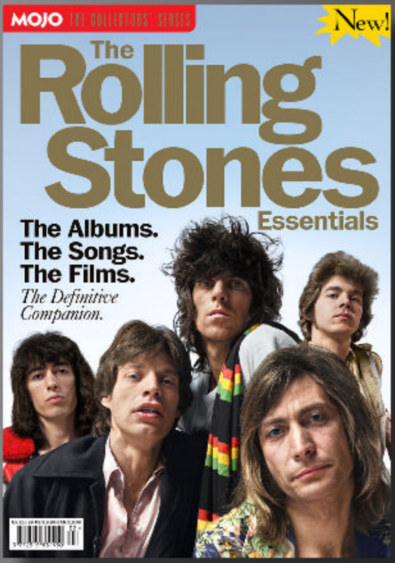
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Pearly king and queen: (clockwise from above) Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie and Liz Fraser take it easy; hit 45 Pearly-Dewdrops' Drop; DJ Tommy Vance flips it; 4AD co-founder Ivo Watts-Russell; Fraser and bassist (far left) Simon Raymonde on-stage in 1984.

MAY 1984

...Cocteau Twins hit the charts

MAY 19 The upper end of this week's UK charts were the '80s *in excelsis*, with Duran Duran, Phil Collins, Lionel Richie and more bringing polished, pastel-shaded pop perfect for daytime radio for years to come. Around the 30 mark, though, what are now seen as the big guns of British alternative music were congregating: The Cure's Caterpillar at 26, Sandie Shaw and The Smiths' Hand In Glove at Number 27, and Echo & The Bunnymen's Silver at Number 30. Nestling between them at 29 were Cocteau Twins, a more mysterious prospect by far, with their cascading, opaque dream-waltz Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops.

The song, already an indie chart-topper, was promoted with a video showing vocalist Elizabeth Fraser pacing the empty Holloway Sanatorium, a Victorian "asylum for the middle-class insane" in Virginia Water, Surrey. The soft-focus promo's illuminated stained glass, slo-mo waterfalls and Fraser's bandmates Robin Guthrie and Simon Raymonde moodily burning leaves fit with certain tropes already gathering around the group – that, with their chiming, protean soundworld and Fraser's ecstatic/infernal mouth music, they were the perfect pre-Raphaelite fantasia for those inclined to swoon. The band soon disowned it. "That video was terrible," Fraser told Melody Maker. "A disaster." Guthrie went further: "Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops was a clinical exercise to get on Top Of The Pops," he told MOJO in 2011. "Ivo [Watts-Russell, co-founder of Cocteaus' label 4AD] had asked for a single, to take us to the next level."

Anyone at 4AD hoping for a smooth transition from indie chart stardom to a wider breakthrough – the previous year, Fraser and Guthrie had already got to Number 66 covering Tim Buckley's Song To The Siren with 4AD supergroup This Mortal Coil – would be frustrated, it seemed.

Formed in 1981 in the petrochemical town of Grangemouth near Falkirk, the group had already released two LPs and three EPs, signalling elegant otherness with Vaughan Oliver and Nigel Grierson's chimerical sleeve art. Some thought their liking for Siouxsie & The Banshees was to the fore on 1982 debut *Garlands*, but after original bassist Will Heggie quit during a tour with OMD in West Germany in May '83, romantic partners Fraser and Guthrie soon struck out into new, hermetic vistas of celestial reverberation with 1983's *Head Over Heels*. When Simon Raymonde, whose '60s pop arranger father Ivor worked with Dusty Springfield and Scott Walker, joined in late '83, he brought what Guthrie later called "balance" to the group.

Still, they seemed ill-at-ease with the prospect of success. They'd performed Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops on the Old Grey Whistle Test in February, but the idea of actually playing it on Top Of The Pops met with derision. "I'd feel a fucking prick standing on-stage, *miming*, with all those people behind me," Guthrie told Q in 1987. "So *what* if you're going to sell more records… it's like a big disco and I don't ever go to discos. Why go to a disco for the first time and be seen by 12 million people doing it?"

> "Top Of The Pops… I'd feel a fucking prick standing on-stage, *miming*."
> **ROBIN GUTHRIE**

Media encounters revealed reluctant interviewees, though crumbs of info were panned by assiduous journalists in early-mid-1984. These included Fraser having tuition from celebrity voice coach Tona de Brett, the singer and guitarist moving in with Watts-Russell after losing their flat in Muswell Hill, the group having to tell radio DJ Tommy

Alamy (2), Getty (7), Courtesy of 4AD

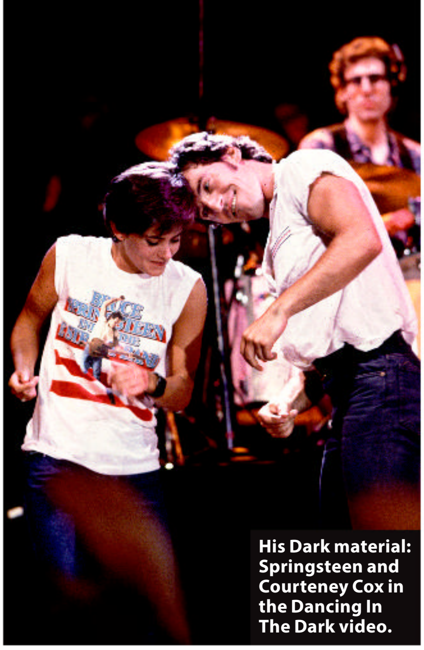
Vance, live on air, that he'd been playing the wrong side of their hit, and the band refusing to let Smash Hits print lyrics to Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops.

What were those secret-language words, anyway? "I've remembered what songs are about," Fraser told Blitz magazine of her unique spirit-howling, which was by now entering the realm of glossolalia. "I've just never remembered at the right time. I don't understand why people get so upset. It's the only chance they've got of finding something for themselves."

With Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops at Number 1 on the indie charts, the group were open to discovery at the Royal Festival Hall on March 8. The performance, which survives on bootleg, is a torrent of luscious textures and programmed beats on tape, with Fraser trilling and soaring on the hit of the moment. After she faux-scolded fans for refusing to stay in their seats, attendees recall seeing celebratory fireworks for the opening of the Thames Barrier, visible from the South Bank, as they departed.

The Cocteaus' story still had 13 years to run, and there was much outstanding music and personal drama to come. With shoegazers and chillwave acts, as well as samplers including The Weeknd, Arca and Grimes, among those in their thrall, it's curious to think that Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops was actually their highest single chart placing. "It *has* to be about emotion," mused Fraser in 1984, who's sung the song at three of the five shows she's played since her old group's 1997 split. "It can't be about anything else."

Ian Harrison


His Dark material: Springsteen and Courteney Cox in the Dancing In The Dark video.

Bruce Dances

MAY 26 **Bruce Springsteen enters the US charts at Number 36 and the UK charts at 34 with Dancing In The Dark, the lead single from his eagerly-awaited new LP *Born In The USA*, which is due for release on June 4. US radio station WSKS Cincinnati has already played the LP in its entirety twice before being served with a cease-and-desist order from the CBS label. The first of seven singles from the multi-platinum LP, Dancing In The Dark has a Brian De Palma-directed video which finds Springsteen dancing with future Friends actress Courteney Cox at a gig in Minnesota. The single also has a long chart life in Britain, finally peaking at Number 4 in February 1985.**

Greyhound on their trail: the Bunnymen in hometown mood, '84.

THE BUNNYMEN'S CRYSTAL DAY

MAY 4 Echo & The Bunnymen release their fourth LP *Ocean Rain*. Advertised, modestly, as 'The Greatest Album Ever Made', it enters the UK LP charts at 4 on May 12 – the same day the group host fan celebration A Crystal Day in Liverpool. Masterminded by manager Bill Drummond, its attractions include a bike ride tracing the shape of the band's mythic 'rabbit god', a Mersey ferry ride involving a food fight with bananas, and a three-set, 25-song Bunnymen performance at St George's Hall to finish. Press man Mick Houghton calls the event Drummond's "parting gift to the group", as he will resign before the year's end. TV show The Tube film it, though some viewers wonder why presenter Jools Holland features so heavily.

ALSO ON!

IT'S A RAP

4 Riding the rap wave, hip-hop musical Breakin' (in the UK, Breakdance) is released. The soundtrack includes The Bar-Keys, Art Of Noise and Chaka Khan (above); Ice-T has a bit part.

FINAL CUTS

12 Roger Waters' debut solo LP *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking* enters the UK LP charts at Number 13. David Gilmour's *About Face* is at Number 90. The two are still, officially, members of Pink Floyd.

JACKO DOMO

14 Michael Jackson receives the Presidential Public Safety Communication Award at the White House from US President Ronald Reagan for lending his song Beat It to an anti-drink driving campaign. "Well, isn't this a thriller?" says Reagan.

SCORING COAL

14 As the coal strike continues, New Order play a show dubbed 'Music For Miners' at London's Royal Festival Hall.

POP SPAT RAGES

26 Culture Club's Boy George tells NME he doesn't understand why Dead Or Alive's Pete Burns resents him, and that Frankie Goes To Hollywood recently threatened him with a fire extinguisher at Sarm Studios. Burns is unrepentant and threatens to send his nemesis "a subscription to the Slimmers' Guide."

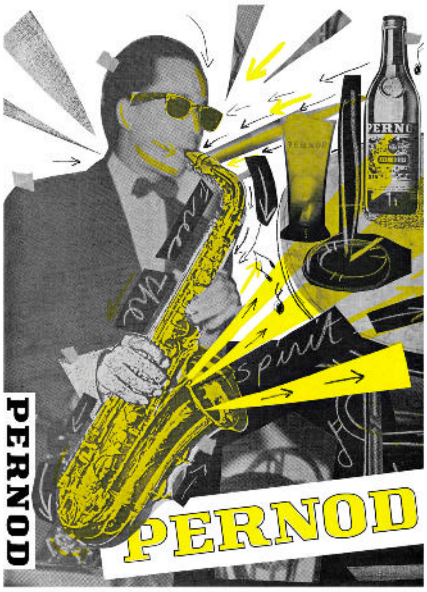
TOP TEN

ITALY SINGLES
MAY 14

1 LOVE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE PAUL YOUNG CBS
2 STATE OF THE NATION INDUSTRY CAPITOL
3 RELAX FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD ZTT/ISLAND
4 DANCE HALL DAYS WANG CHUNG GEFFEN
5 JUMP VAN HALEN WARNER BROS
6 VICTIMS CULTURE CLUB VIRGIN
7 STREET DANCE BREAK MACHINE CGD
8 BIG IN JAPAN ALPHAVILLE WEA
9 RADIO GA GA QUEEN EMI
10 REGGAE NIGHT JIMMY CLIFF CBS

Nippon, no gain: at Number 8, it's Alphaville!

AD ARCHIVE 1984



A stiff French liqueur? Plus jazz? Sounds like a plan (beware drinking a full bottle while aged 15, however, it may put you off for life).

CHERRY BOMB
PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

My name is…: (clockwise from top left) Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson and pioneering agriculturalist namesake Jethro Tull; The White Stripes' Jack White goes Spanish; Tyler, The Creator's alternative fag-and-pee sleeve; Bowie and Ronson: Mars-bound.

Who named themselves after real people?

Come with us as we answer those nagging questions and solve the conundrums of rock obscuria.

The recent death of blind piano tuner Marshall Tucker reminded me how the Marshall Tucker Band got their moniker, which led me to recall how Lynyrd Skynyrd and Greta Van Fleet also borrowed the names of living people. Who else has done it? There must be more.

Michael O'Neill, via e-mail

MOJO says: Greta Van Fleet (allegedly) adapted the name of one Gretna Van Fleet, but we know what you mean. The obvious example is Jethro Tull, named after the 18th century agricultural innovator: other historically derived group names include prog harmonisers Capability Brown (a landscape gardener), Texas rockers Cotton Mather (the puritan witch-finder), and Glasgow indie band Franz Ferdinand (the assassinated Archduke). Some names are so familiar you almost forget their derivation, as with Engelbert Humperdinck (originally a German composer), Crazy Horse (the Native American resistance leader) and The Beau Brummels, named for the noted dandy of Regency England. More straightforward, perhaps, are bands inspired by sports, as Pelé (football), Babe Ruth (baseball) and Mookie Blaylock (basketball, an early name of Pearl Jam) show, and you have to admire the chutzpah of groups like Courtney Love (a '90s duo from the Pacific north-west), The New Lou Reeds and the Dave Gilmour Girls for getting straight to the point. The world of acting, meanwhile, brings us The James Dean Driving Experience, Spencer Tracy (the original name of '80s sophisti-popsters Danny Wilson) and old MOJO picks Abe Vigoda, while literature has yielded such recording artistes as HP Lovecraft, Charles Dickens (AKA fashion snapper David Anthony) and Lydia Lunch/Kim Gordon band Harry Crews. For sheer effrontery, the world of reggae deserves praise, with acts trading as Laurel & Hardy, Tony Curtis and Clint Eastwood, while the criminal milieu has given us Pretty Boy Floyd, several Jack Rubys and The Jim Jones Revue. So, there are plenty, and we haven't even mentioned The Amazing Roy North Penis Band, other composite band names such as The Brian Jonestown Massacre and Kathleen Turner Overdrive, or early-'80s Connecticut powerpoppers Margaret Thatcher & The Supply Side. Tell us your best band name tributes, please!

Getty (4)

WHEN WERE CIGS BANNED?

Recently I found Black Sabbath's *Heaven And Hell* and Van Halen's *1984* going cheap. Both feature angels smoking cigarettes. Tobacco used to be a frequent sight on LP covers, but when did it become *verboten*?

Phil Ashcroft, via e-mail

MOJO says: You're not wrong: they were all at it, from Paul McCartney having a fag on the go on the cover of *Abbey Road* to Harry Nilsson, Frank Sinatra, Tom Waits, Joni Mitchell and many more (not to mention *loads* of jazz LPs). After the Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002 quashed positive depictions of cigarette smoking, such late-to-the-party examples as Arctic Monkeys' *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* (2006), Ryan Adams' *Easy Tiger* (2007) and Gil Scott-Heron's *I'm New Here* (2010) duly depicted scenarios unlikely to make anyone want to start. More recent examples include Lee Ann Womack's *The Lonely, The Lonesome & The Gone* (2017), Paul Weller's *True Meanings* (2018) and an alternative sleeve for Tyler, The Creator's 2015 LP *Cherry Bomb*, which juxtaposes an unlit cigarette and what appears to be evidence of the smoker wetting themselves – we knew it was a filthy habit!

SPEAKING IN TONGUES (REVISITED)

International performers singing German lyrics – especially in the '60s – are truly legion. A CD series entitled *1000 Nadelstiche* (A Thousand Needle Stitches) – named after the German sung version of Needles And Pins by The Searchers – is proof of that: 12 volumes present non-native-singing artists from the '50s into the '70s trying their very best to please their 'Krautland' fans by singing in German. Hardly for better, mostly for worse… but in hindsight predominantly providing a lot of unintentional humour.

Martin Schreiber, Lahr, Germany

MOJO says: Danke, Martin! We need to hear the likes of Paul Anka, Joan Baez and the Everly Brothers singing in German. And thanks also to Helen Lock for nominating Conquista, The White Stripes' Spanish-language version of Conquest, and to Steve Darnell for reminding us that "Peter Gabriel recorded not one, but two albums (Melt and Security) entirely in German. Not sure what the motivation was but it is great fun to sing along to Spiele Ohne Grenzen and Schock Den Affen."

HELP MOJO

I was listening to the expanded edition of Mick Ronson's *Play Don't Worry* and, reading the title Is There Life On Mars?, expected to hear a cover of the song by Bowie (who gifted Ronson the backing track for the cover of the VU's White Light/White Heat which appears). It's actually a completely different song. So what's the story?

Andrew Nicholls, via e-mail

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Darling Earbuds

Win! Final audio ZE8000 wireless earphones.

FINAL IS one of the most respected brands in high-end audio, with an extensive history starting in Japan in 1974. With almost 50 years of experience in hi-fi, they have achieved legendary status at home for their unique approach to design and development. The ZE8000 is packed with features, some of which have never before been available – for the ZE8000, Final has introduced their sound quality-prioritised Active Noise Cancelling (ANC), allowing users to fully enjoy the extraordinary 8K Sound experience without distractions. With the ZE8000, Final has shown that high-end, hi-fi audio quality is possible from a wireless earphone!

They're worth £299, and we have TWO pairs to give away! Be in it to win it by completing the crossword, then send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 355 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date is **June 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com.

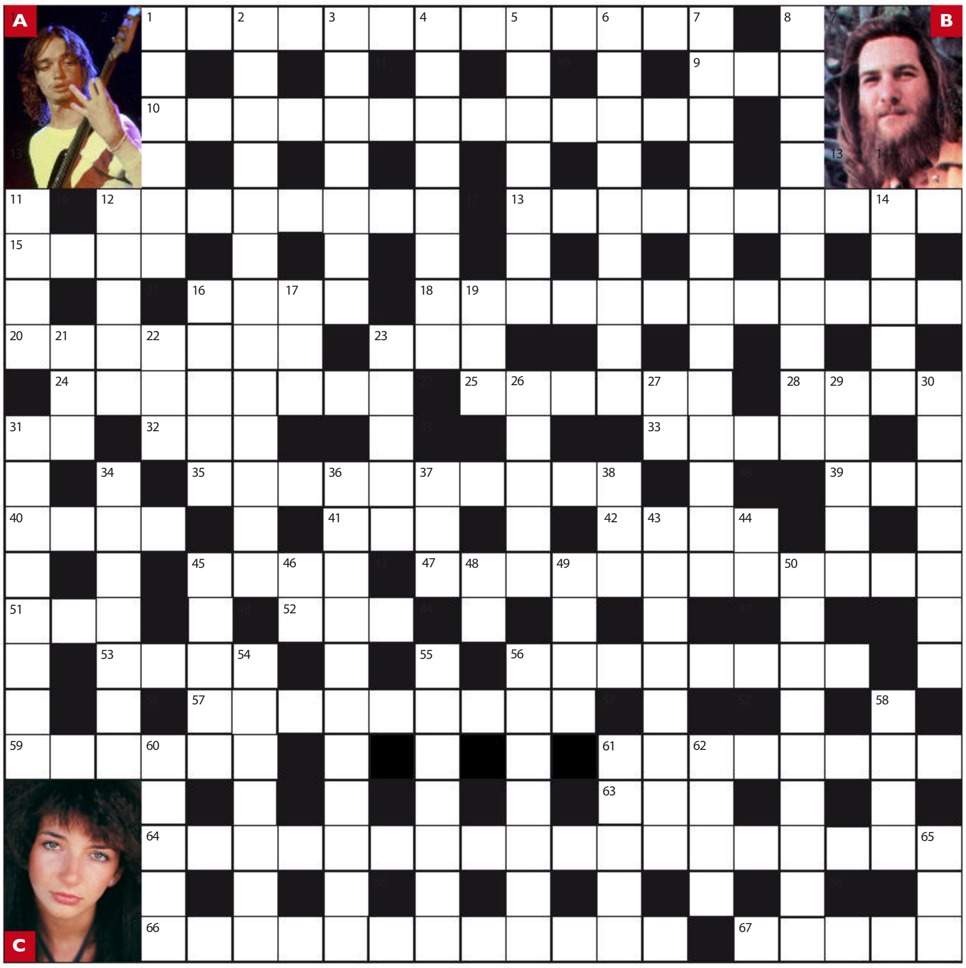
ANSWERS

MOJO 353

Across: 1 Mary Wells, 6 Angels, 9 Great Balls Of Fire, 10 Cavalier, 12 EP, 13 Imaginary, 15 Doc, 17 Marc Willett, 18 Etna, 20 Ian, 22 Art, 24 Selected, 25 Len, 26 Hellhound, 27 EFL, 28 Dee, 29 Soldier, 30 Macbeth, 32 Eerie, 33 CES, 34 Reckless, 35 Eusebio, 37 Twinset, 38 Oud, 40 Birth, 42 Ice, 43 Ear, 44 Nomads, 46 Aida, 48 Yn, 49 RCA, 51 Den, 53 ASL, 54 Drag, 55 Skiing, 56 Do The Strand, 58 Paso, 60 Lent, 63 Emma Anderson, 65 Status, 66 Trap, 67 Malcolm McLaren.

Down: 1 Magma, 2 Reelin In The Years, 3 Waterslide, 4 Leave It All Behind, 5 Sold, 6 Atomic, 7 Gaffa, 8 Lord Ivanhoe, 10 Comus, 11 Viral Black, 14 Azimuth Coordinator, 16 Oor, 19 Telecaster, 21 Nadirs, 22 Andy Ross, 23 The Meeting, 29 Sprained, 31 Is That Real, 36 Breakout, 39 Don Gibson, 40 Bashment, 41 Idle, 45 Mat, 47 Addle, 48 Yarns, 50 CSS, 52 En, 57 Samba, 59 AA, 61 Eric, 62 Tool, 64 DFA, 65 Sic.

Winner: Istvan Szikora of **Winchester** wins a pair of Px8 McLaren Edition headphones from Bowers & Wilkins and McLaren Automotive.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (4,9)
9 '90s sort-of-indie label, home of The Auteurs and Verve (3)
10 Giorgio Moroder's Deutsche disco appliance? (6,7)
12 Kid Creole's tropical singers (8)
13 A top buzz from Slim Harpo (2,1,4,3)
15 Cate Le Bon's eight-legged day? (4)
16 Boz Scaggs shuffled there (4)
18 – - --- --- --- Baby (Dr Feelgood) (2,1,3,3,3)
20 LP whereon The Temptations were depicted on Mount Rushmore (7)
23 Noted film music studio, also used by Lou Reed, Deep Purple etc (3)
24 Going up, Hot Hot Heat (8)
25 Nils Frahm finds his thread (6)
28 Grateful Dead's Biblical brother (4)
31 Rare Earth, for Mother's Day? (2)
32 I --- Your Pardon, said Lynn Anderson (3)
33 The Housemartins bleat to the beat (5)
35 Sassafras soaring in '76 (6,4)
39 King Sunny Adé, oracular in '98 (3)
40 Just-so NWOBHM label (4)
41 Ian North's band and solo debut (3)
42 Factory's video arm (4)
45 Jamiroquai and Beverley Knight's was the main one (4)
47 4AD's cavorting skeletons? (4,3,5)
51 AKA Mr. Burrell (3)
52 Jam, Leppard or American (3)
53 King Creosote's floor covering? (4)
56 Rockabilly guys from north London (8)
57 Maker of *Serpent Music* (4,5)
59 Kevin Coyne and Dagmar Krause talk fast in '79 (6)
61 R.E.M.'s song for the Man Of Steel (8)
63 Downpatrick's pop-punkers (3)
64 Discreet early Underworld single (10,3,5)
66 See photoclue B (5,7)
67 Mick and John Head's band (5)

DOWN

1 Carter USM's singer (3,3)
2 The Imperials' invitation to conceptualise (3,3,7)
3 '40s Chicano music/fashion style (7)
4 ---- ---- Different Day Pts. 1 and 2 (Jaguar Wright) (4,4)
5 ---- -- - Lifetime (Talking Heads) (4,2,1)
6 AKA The Hotstepper (3, 6)
7 Suede's stylish heroine (4,2,7)
8 US folk murder song updated by Nick Cave (7,3)
11 Australian jazz-rockers who featured colourful singer/jailbreaker Ian Saxon (1,1,1,1)
12 These English proggers got the hump (5)
14 ----- Gay (OMD) (5)
16 Taylor Swift's amatory disc from 2019 (5)
17 *Ta --- Lugnt* (Dungen) (3)
19 Or, Muscle Shoals Sound (1,1,1)
21 Label born when three big imprints united in 1971 (1,1,1)
22 Shelton, Rochford or Fontaine (3)
23 Pauline Oliveros' music for the mature wise woman? (5)
26 The place Japan had visions of (5)
27 Heim, terse in 2018 (2)
29 Can's cutlery-related hit (5)
30 George Harrison was never without one (7)
31 Headache-inducing The The LP (4,4)
34 Where Donald Byrd and Gigi Grice donned white coats (4,3)
36 The ----- ------, George Duke's essence from within (5, 6)
37 The name Grace Slick nearly called her daughter (3)
38 Compton rapper who said Leave My Curl Alone (2,1)
43 See photoclue C (4,4)
44 Rocket From The Crypt guitarist (1,1)
45 What your records are made out of (5)
46 The Wailers Band, identifiable in '89 (1,1)
48 The --, venerable Dutch punks (2)
49 Back, Green or Trap (4)
50 First all Jagger-Richards-penned Stones LP (9)
54 Circuit Des Yeux's late-arriving 2013 LP (7)
55 Post-Talulah Gosh band (7)
56 Andy Capp's early "talking" reggae hit (3,1,3)
58 Indian music improvisatory form (4)
60 Nina Simone's were Pastel (5)
61 Erik, composer of the Gymnopédies (5)
62 Japanese singer, ex- of Aunt Sally (4)
65 Label, home to Suzi Quatro, Hot Chocolate, Mud etc (3)

Feel the force: (above, left) keyboard king Dele Sosimi and (right) Afrobeat magus Fela Kuti performing in Kuti's Afrika Shrine, Lagos, late '70s; (below, right) Sosimi and (left) his "hero" Kuti; (below) Dele today.

Dele Sosimi and Egypt 80

It began with **Fela Kuti** in Lagos. It ended when his apprentices followed his example.

HELLO 1979

I was lucky because I was [Fela Kuti's son] Femi's best mate in high school in Lagos. So with Fela, I have a double privilege of being an extra son and working in the band.

When I met Fela for the first time [in Ikeja, location of Kuti's Afrika Shrine nightspot, at the house of his friend J.K. Brimah] I was going on 14. Femi said, "Fela, you remember my friend, the son of the banker [Oyekunle Sosimi] that was assassinated?" Fela was, "Quick, come, sit down, tell me what exactly happened." I was touched. On my dad's side, everybody was scared shitless. But Fela was like, you know, "My house was burned and I'm fighting the case, I'm gonna win and I'm gonna fight for your family." I looked at him like a hero from then on.

He knew I played the piano because Femi and I were in the school band. But, a few years later, me asking to sit in on a song and take a solo when he was playing in the Shrine, that was a different ballgame. He looked at me, questioning me, and took a *loooong* pull on his joint and blew out a plume of smoke – my eyes watered! And then he said, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes Fela, yes Fela." He said, "Go on then!" I took that first solo. And that was that. If you knew your stuff, if you are intuitive as a player, you have nothing to fear from Fela. But if you keep on making mistakes, your wage is gone and if you're not careful you'll be playing for free for the next three weeks. That enough was reason for people to be on their game.

The Shrine is the kind of place where – if you have all your wits about you, and maybe your third eye has opened – you know that the force is there. That is why the President of France would go and visit [in 2018] and then go back to France and his country won the World Cup, ha ha ha! He went to go and get some blessings and some powers. You may not be able to explain it, but you know if you become one with it.

"He took a *loooong* pull on his joint and blew out a plume of smoke."
DELE SOSIMI

GOODBYE 1986

When you're part of Egypt 80, you are playing six-hour sets, four times a week, for 50 weeks a year. Everyone will tell you, this is a band that have been gigging for *yonks*. Playing with Fela I met Herbie Hancock, Stanley Clarke, Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter… it was surreal.

So, Fela has come out of jail [he was imprisoned in 1984 by Nigeria's military dictatorship]. We had planned to rehearse from 4pm. The band are sitting on chairs, tuned, and ready for "one, two, hit it!" on the dot of the hour. He didn't come until midnight. You know, we can appreciate you can't wait to get with your wives and girlfriends – or ex-wives and girlfriends, by then he had divorced his 27 wives – but maybe that made me flip. A lot of things that Femi and I instilled into Egypt 80, all our discipline, had just been flung out of the window. I felt aggrieved.

OK. Fela taught us: if you don't agree with something, make a stand. So I didn't go to the second rehearsal. He sent someone asking me to explain, so I sent a message back with a resignation letter – you know, when you're young, you're radical. I was thinking he'd say, "No Dele, you can't go, come come, let's talk." Nothing happened. My plan backfired. That was hard – shit, I don't have a job, man, damn. This is for real!

I didn't even know Femi had similar thoughts – both of us resigned, ha ha! We tried a few things and then his mum decided she would put some money in for us to form a band [Femi Kuti & The Positive Force]. Because he's the son of Fela, it wasn't difficult to get shows.

Fela never came to see Positive Force. But then things got sort of smoothed over to the stage where Fela gave him Sunday at the Shrine. There was a welcome again. We never discussed the matter. I can't second guess him, but I would like to believe that he thought to himself, "Yeah, these guys have learned more than a chip off my block." When I did my 60th birthday party at the Jazz Café [on February 22, 2023], I felt Fela's spirit in the house. I still feel him strongly – the force has never left.

As told to Ian Harrison

Dele Sosimi & The Estuary 21's The Confluence (Wah Wah 45s) is out now.

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